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DEVIANCE IN A CYBERCOMMUNITY

Victoria Wang

Thesis submitted in candidature for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Centre for Criminal Justice and Criminology,
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to John V. Tucker and Kevin R. Haines.

Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habits, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.

D.H. Lawrence *Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928)*

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First and foremost, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Professor J.V. Tucker to this thesis and my growth, both intellectually and personally. Five years ago, my life took a wonderful turn when Professor Tucker accepted me as his third year project student. Although very different in nature, this thesis has its origins in my third year project — *An Investigation of Cybercrime* (2005). From the very early days when the basic ideas were being formulated, through the investigations and writing process, Professor Tucker has provided much academic support and stimulation, as well as, personal advice and help. Without any of these, I would not be able to complete this thesis.

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Special thanks must be given to Mrs. Jill Edwards, as well as, the staff of Centre for Criminal Justice and Criminology, and Department of Computer Science, Swansea University. I would also like to thank my good friends Mr. Andrew Barnard and Mr. Gregg Williams.

In short, although there have been many ups and downs, it has been the best time of my life.

Victoria Wang



Abstract

Are cybercommunities new “hotbeds of deviance”? Current research on deviance in cybercommunities seems to suggest that some fundamental characteristics of these communities, such as anonymity, have resulted in high levels of deviance. To achieve a fresh and deeper understanding, this thesis explores, theoretically and empirically, the nature of deviance in cybercommunities in the context of a thorough sociological account of the conditions and characteristics of modernity. Drawing on ideas mainly from Giddens’ theories of modernity, the formation and various aspects of cybercommunities may be understood as extreme products of modernity.

This research aims to meld theory and empirical work together to achieve a coherent account of deviance in cybercommunities. Giddens’ theories form an abstract framework, which places the research in a particular theoretical position where the relevance for criminology of the general social theory of Giddens, is analysed. During the empirical investigation, these theories are used as a set of guidelines to direct and shape the identification of the four main research themes: *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity*, as well as, the collection of data. Next, Giddens’ notions, such as *time space distanciation*, *transformation of intimacy* and *reflexivity*, alongside the four main themes, are central to the reflexive and coherent account of deviance in Second Life in Chapter Five (*Understanding Deviance in Second Life*). In accordance with the interpretive relationship between theory and empirical work, this research couples a grounded theory approach with adaptive theorising. Special attention is paid to the use of technologies that are native to cybercommunities in the research process.

The cybercommunity Second Life is selected as a research field, because it may be understood as an exemplar of modernity, both sociologically and technologically. Through an in-depth analysis of data gathered from online participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a Second Life residential forum, this research shows that the deviance in cybercommunities may not necessarily mean any ‘real’ deviance in these communities, but reflects some broader social anxieties born out of, and associated with, the conditions of modernity. The thesis concludes by stressing the questionable effectiveness of technology as a regulator, both in Second Life and in the real world, and advocates the importance of social bond as a mediator of deviance.

Contents

1	Introduction	11
1.1	Understanding the thesis	11
1.2	Mapping the thesis	20
1.3	Situating the thesis	27
1.3.1	Cybercrime and cyberspace	27
1.3.2	On technology	31
1.3.3	On modernity	35
2	Cybercommunity and Deviance in the Age of Modernity	38
2.1	Cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity	39
2.1.1	On cybercommunity	40
2.1.2	On self-identity	49
2.2	Understanding deviance in cybercommunities	60
2.2.1	Pluralism and ontological insecurity	61
2.2.2	Deviant acts in cybercommunities	64
2.2.3	Reflexivity and risk	67
2.3	Conclusion	69
3	Grounded Theory in a Cybercommunity: A Reflexive Methodology	71
3.1	Research methodology: a continuing dialogue between theory and empirical work	74
3.1.1	Pre-existing conceptual frameworks, literature and data sources	77
3.1.2	The research process: adaptive theorising	79
3.1.3	Theory-guided search for the site of inquiry	87
3.2	Research method	94
3.2.1	Observation: participant	97
3.2.2	Questionnaire: self-completion	102
3.2.3	Discussion in a Second Life forum	114
3.2.4	Additional ethical considerations	126
3.3	Conclusion	127

4	Observing Second Life: Structure, Community and Deviance	129
4.1	Second Life: structure and community	129
4.1.1	Origin and development	130
4.1.2	People and community	134
4.1.3	Geography and governance	147
4.2	Second Life: emerging main themes for the analysis of deviance	153
4.2.1	Norm	155
4.2.2	Power	161
4.2.3	Self-identity	165
4.2.4	Conformity	169
4.3	Conclusion	175
5	Understanding Deviance in Second Life	176
5.1	Norm	179
5.1.1	The motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life .	181
5.1.2	The nature of deviance in Second Life	185
5.2	Power	197
5.2.1	The frequency of deviance in Second Life	199
5.2.2	Time-space distancing in Second Life	205
5.3	Self-identity	212
5.3.1	Anonymity	214
5.3.2	The reflexivity of modernity and ontological insecurity	223
5.4	Conformity	230
5.4.1	Bond	233
5.4.2	Control	240
5.5	Conclusion	246
6	Conclusion	248
	Appendix 1: The List of Acts in Questionnaire 1	263
	Appendix 2: The List of Acts in Questionnaire 2	268
	Appendix 3: The List of Acts in Questionnaire 3	272
	Appendix 4: The List of Motivations in Questionnaire 1	277
	Appendix 5: Covering Letter 1	279
	Appendix 6: Covering Letter 2	280

Appendix 7: Covering Letter 3	281
Appendix 8: Covering Letter 4	282
Appendix 9: Figures and Tables in Chapter Five	283
Appendix 10: The List of 16 Questions	312
Appendix 11: Questionnaire 1 Web Version	314
Appendix 12: Questionnaire 2 Questions	326
Appendix 13: Questionnaire 3 Questions	333
Appendix 14: Covering Web Page	340
Appendix 15: Second Life Community Standards	342
Bibliography	346

List of Figures

3.1	The pre-existing theoretical framework	81
3.2	The investigation of deviance	82
3.3	An individual's condition	82
3.4	Four categories of motivations	83
3.5	Eight categories of deviant acts	83
3.6	The four main themes	83
3.7	The theoretical framework after the questionnaire research	84
3.8	The theoretical framework facilitating the last stage of empirical work	85
3.9	The general model	89
3.10	The final six 3D cybercommunities	92
3.11	Rosser Writer	97
3.12	Dialogue box	99
3.13	Selecting sub-communities	101
3.14	2nd life profile	111
3.15	Give item and IM	112
3.16	Covering letter received	113
3.17	The post	115
3.18	The front page	115
3.19	"Yeasty collection"	116
3.20	We do not welcome researchers.	118
3.21	Why do not you pretend to be just another resident?	119
3.22	Why do not you immerse yourself in SL?	120
3.23	Griefed	122
3.24	An interview	122
3.25	The researcher is "sick of the lot of us by now".	122
3.26	This researcher is "on the level".	123
3.27	"Stayed and fought"	123
3.28	Rosser is an "intelligent and pleasant person".	124
3.29	The total number of posts and viewers	124
3.30	"Silly-buggers on thread"	125

4.1	Second Life monthly user hours	134
4.2	Accounts	136
4.3	Two Furrries in Second Life	137
4.4	Anshe Chung	138
4.5	Brace Coral	138
4.6	Torley Linden	139
4.7	Jade Lily	139
4.8	Orientation Island Public	139
4.9	Friendship Card	140
4.10	Search	142
4.11	Help Island Public	142
4.12	A less popular area	142
4.13	3 popular sims	142
4.14	Popular places	143
4.15	ATM	143
4.16	Exchange Rate	145
4.17	Mini Map	147
4.18	Abuse Reporter	151
4.19	Bump, Push & Hit Report	151
4.20	Access denied	153
4.21	Ejected	153
4.22	The Shelter House Rules	153
4.23	Child abuse	167
4.24	Marsellus Wallace (left) with associates	168
4.25	Taylor and Pollard's Second Life wedding	170
5.1	The institutional dimensions of modernity	206
5.2	Gestures	218
5.3	Maintaining normal appearance	219
5.4	Editing appearance	222
5.5	The distributed body	225
1	Motivation categories (mean scores, N = 44)	283
2	Motivation categories (response categories' percentage means)	283
3	Motivation categories: paired samples test	284
4	Modernity related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)	285
5	Modernity related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 4)	285
6	Community related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)	286

7	Community related motivations (response categories' percentage means)(The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 6)	286
8	Self-identity related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)	287
9	Self-identity related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 8)	287
10	Commerce related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)	288
11	Commerce related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 10)	288
12	Leisure related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)	289
13	Leisure related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 12)	289
14	Nature: acts categories (mean scores, N = 44) (The mean scores are calculated after deleting 5 = Don't know)	290
15	Nature: acts categories (response categories' percentage means)	290
16	Nature: acts categories (paired samples test)	291
17	SL community damage related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 1)	292
18	Avatar's property related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 2)	293
19	Avatar related acts (response categories' percentage means) (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 3)	295
20	Text & graphic related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 4)	296
21	Real world norms related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 5)	297
22	Powerful groups related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 6)	297
23	SL community norms related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 7)	298
24	Avatar's self-identity & privacy related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 8)	299
25	Paired samples correlations & paired samples test: E45, E46 & E47	300
26	Paired samples correlations & paired samples test: E63 & E64	300
27	Paired samples test: E57 & E56; E55 & E54; E52 & E53; E44 & E43; E51 & E50	301
28	Paired samples test: E58 & E59	301
29	Paired samples correlations & paired samples test: E26 & E85; E26 & E86	302
30	Paired samples test: E27 & E12; E28 & E12; E30 & E12	302

31	Paired samples test: E48 & E49	302
32	Paired samples test: E89 & E90	303
33	Paired samples test: E35 & E71; E16 & E65; E37 & E69; E37 & E42; E69 & E42; E36 & E40; E34 & E33	303
34	Categories of acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)	304
35	Experience: acts categories (response categories' percentage means)	304
36	Performance: acts categories (response categories' percentage means)	305
37	SL community norms related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)	305
38	SL community damage related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)	306
39	Powerful groups related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44) . . .	306
40	Real world norms related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44) . . .	307
41	Text & graphic related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)	307
42	Avatar related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)	308
43	Avatar's identity & privacy related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)	308
44	Avatar's property related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44) . . .	309
45	Questionnaire 1: What avatar type most describes your avatar? (N = 44)	309
46	Questionnaire 2: What avatar type most describes your avatar? (N = 44)	310
47	Questionnaire 3: What avatar type most describes your avatar? (N = 44)	310
48	Questionnaire 1: Avatar type and acts categories	311
49	Questionnaire 1: Independent samples test: type	311

Chapter 1

Introduction

The thesis aims to understand the nature of deviance in cybercommunities by examining the relationship between cybercommunities and the modern world. Giddens' theories of modernity are used as a set of analytical tools to examine this relationship. The first chapter introduces the thesis and is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief outline of the thesis. The second section explains the structure of the thesis. The third section serves three purposes, firstly, to situate the research in the wider criminological context of crime and Internet technologies; secondly, to separate deviance in cybercommunities from Internet related crime, based on three different roles of Internet technologies; and, thirdly, to offer a basic account of Giddens' theories of modernity.

1.1 Understanding the thesis

The growth of the Internet and its impact on existing political, social, economic and cultural life, locally and globally, are astonishing. Some users of the Internet spend a significant part of their lives in a virtual social context constructed by a global network of computers, named 'cyberspace'. Cyberspace comprises various communities, known as 'cybercommunities'. Within these newly created cybercommunities, various computer technologies have generated new forms of human communication, interaction and social structure. In some more technically progressive cybercommunities, participants are able to play roles in new environments, situations and communities, realising all kinds of advanced human activities. Some of these activities could be, indeed are, interpreted as deviant by some people.

There is some research dedicated to the study of deviance in cybercommunities (e.g., Williams 2006a & b; 2005; 2004; 2003; 2001). However, at this moment, there is only a limited understanding of deviance in cybercommunities. Deviance in cybercommu-

nities presents a challenge different from terrestrial crime as “the normal disciplines by which we evaluate the plausibility of threat levels are absent” (Levi 2001, p. 50). Current research on deviance in cybercommunities seems to suggest that some fundamental characteristics of cybercommunities are responsible for high levels of deviance (e.g., Williams 2006a & 2003). For example, the so-called dark side of the cybercommunity Second Life has attracted much attention from the media, encouraging the idea that cybercommunities are becoming new “hotbeds of deviance”. In the broader context of cyberspace, technologies are facilitating what might be understood as traditional forms of criminal activities; creating new channels for activities that are currently recognised by existing criminal or civil law; and forging entirely novel and unprecedented forms of deviance that are yet to be rationalised in legal discourse (Wall 1998). Activities that are recognised by existing criminal or civil law are usually known as *cybercrime*, whereas those that are yet to be rationalised in legal discourse may be referred to as cyber deviance. To separate deviance from crime, Williams proposed that “Cybercrimes are acts that contravene specific terrestrial laws in any one jurisdiction, while cyber deviance or harms are activities that contravene social norms and values within any given on or offline community” (Williams 2003, p. 260).

In the more specific context of cybercommunities, it is argued that a weakening of the sense of community, partly caused by the lack of physicality, and the excess of anonymity, fragility and playfulness in relationships, seems to be making cybercommunities a place where individuals feel free to indulge in deviant activities (Williams 2006a & 2003). Williams wrote: “The relative freedom individuals may feel by being untied from material commitments of the offline world may account for increased levels of deviant activity online” (Williams 2003, p. 185).

Wall (2007) suggests that Presdee’s (2000) ‘carnival of crime’ thesis based on social structure/alienation theory is a powerful theory that begins to explain the transformative impacts of the Internet. In the ‘carnival of crime’ thesis, Presdee (2000) expresses a broader concern over the criminalisation of every life which seems to be generated by the modern and highly commodified society. Presdee (2000) suggests that much of crime occurring in society, especially that relating to social disorder, is a product of the fact that the existing political invasion of social life through social policies encourages individuals to live two lives. The first life is the ‘official’ life characterised by work and governed by imposed order. The second life is “the only true site for the expression of one’s true feelings for life... where truth can be told against the cold hearted lies of rational, scientific modernity” (Presdee 2000, p. 8). This ‘true site’ is “expressed through the world of excess, obscenity and degradation” (Presdee 2000, p. 8). Presdee has identified the Internet as “fast becoming the safe site of the second life of the people”

(Presdee 2000, p. 54). During the course of living in this 'safe site' of the Internet, the boundaries of order are frequently crossed (Wall 2007).

Williams (2003) suggests that a combined theoretical position of Hirschi's control theory (Hirschi 1969) and self-control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990), with additional sociological theorising, is able to explain online antisocial activity in cybercommunities. Many forces unique to the online environment lead to a weakening of the bond between an individual and the cybercommunity to which he/she belongs, and this weakening of the bond allows for a meaningful understanding of why individuals are more likely to be deviant online rather than offline (Williams 2003). A demise of social bond in cyberspace is also visible in Wall's (2007) analysis of cybercrime. He wrote: "The virtual relationships within online communities contain neither the full panoply of social relationships nor the cohesive or organic expectations of community relationships" (Wall 2007, p. 33). Moreover, one of the fundamental characteristics -- even attractions of cybercommunities -- anonymity, is closely connected with the lowering of social inhibition (Lemert 1972). This close connection encourages the idea that cybercommunities may serve as new "hotbeds of deviance".

Are cybercommunities new "hotbeds of deviance"? We do not know. In fact, we do not know much about the sociology of cybercommunities at all. To make sense of the fledging realm of cybercommunities, this thesis makes an attempt to understand the nature of deviance in the cybercommunity Second Life; of particular interest, is its relationship with the modern world. Second Life is a virtual society which seems to be developing into a 'projection' of the real world. Perhaps, the rise of cybercommunities has something to do with the modern world. In some influential theories of society, the modern world is interpreted as an uncertain place to live (e.g., Bauman 2001; Giddens 1991 & 1990). The uncertain world has driven many individuals to seek alternative life styles and cybercommunities may be perceived as some of the possible options. There may be various possible reasons behind individuals' interest in cybercommunities. These reasons may form a sociological terrain with two extreme polarities. At one pole, the cold scientific rationality of modernity and its structures and politics have generated an enduring sense of nostalgia for community as a source of security and belonging; at the other pole, a growing sense of individualism has induced a demand for environments where the emancipation of self could be achieved.

Moreover, the rapid growth of cybercommunities seems to suggest that they are able to offer more than some communities in the real world. What can cybercommunities provide for participants that communities in the real world fail to cater for?

Drawing on ideas from Giddens' *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990), *Modernity and*

Self-Identity (1991) and Berger et al.'s *Homeless Mind* (1974), the formation and various aspects of cybercommunities may be understood as extreme products of modernity. This argument is based on the reflexive nature of the relationships among the following elements, namely: *technology*, *modernity*, *community* and *self-identity*. In Chapter Two,¹ this argument is fully developed. In short, these four elements must be viewed in terms of their inter-relations, which must be considered to be dynamic. This dynamism helps to build a model with which social orders in a cybercommunity can be better understood and analysed.

In the past, technology was seen as undermining community by bringing about different forms of organised institutional orders (e.g., Berger et al. 1974). Currently, technology plays an important role in reshaping social relations in various communities (Delanty 2003). In some influential theories of cybercommunity, the formation of cybercommunities is considered as an example of technological change and innovation having the ability to turn around the social and cultural decay in contemporary society (e.g., Rheingold 1993). With all these in mind, some individuals' participation in cybercommunities may be interpreted as a double-edged response to modernity — retreating from the existing social world to pursue an ideal world, or pursuing a more extreme version of modernity to be carried beyond modernity itself.

Therefore, to understand links between the modern world, cybercommunity and deviance, some coherent account of modernity is required. In this thesis, Giddens' (1991 & 1990) theories of modernity are adopted as a set of analytical tools to provide a possible analytical framework. This choice has three advantages:

- Giddens' theories are extensive and rich in sociological ideas and provide explicit conditions or characteristics for modernity.
- These theories discuss the individual and community, which is needed for a more in depth study of deviance in cybercommunities.
- The role of technology in shaping modernity is emphasised in these theories, which makes them well suited to explore the technological nature of cybercommunities.

In Giddens' sociological account, 'modernity' has not yet run its course: many ideas that are often associated with post-modernity are merely developments of modernity. Giddens emphasises the uniqueness of the modern world and the *discontinuous* conception of social change associated with the modern world. In short, the uniquenesses of modern world are: the transformation of time and space, the "disembedding" of social relations from a specific context (which is closely associated with the transformation of

¹See: Section 2.1 (*Cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity*).

time and space) and the “reflexive ordering and re-ordering” of social relations (Giddens 1990, pp. 16-17). The discontinuities of the modern world are: the rapid pace of change, the rapid scope of change and the emergence of completely new institutional forms (Giddens 1990). Giddens (1990) proposes that modernity rests upon reflexivity. Reflexivity is the process that “All human beings routinely “keep in touch” with the grounds of what they do as an integral element of doing it” (Giddens 1990, p. 36). Modern societies, especially networked societies allow for time and space to be distanced, which means an action in one spatial-temporal boundary may have an effect outside of that restriction (Giddens 1990). Following this logic, cybercommunities also have a reflexive relationship with the real world.

If the rise of cybercommunities is a direct consequence of modernity and Giddens’ theories of modernity provide an understanding of the modern world, then these theories may be used to understand cybercommunities and deviance in these contexts. Most deviant acts in cybercommunities do not have legal statuses. Moreover, there isn’t a uniform set of activities commonly defined as deviant in all cybercommunities. It seems that the social characteristics and technological capabilities of a cybercommunity have significant influence on the rise of the types of deviant acts in the cybercommunity. From this, it is speculated that an individual’s perception of deviance in a cybercommunity may depend on his/her awareness of, and involvement with, the cultural, social and technological aspects of the cybercommunity. This awareness and involvement may be intimately related to various factors, such as the reasons behind the individual’s participation in the cybercommunity, and the relationship between this individual and his/her created avatar. With all these in mind, a particular focus of this study is on an individual’s condition.

Methodologically, carrying out social science research in a cybercommunity presents various challenges. The methodology of ethnography is often used to carry out research in cybercommunities (e.g., Boellstorff 2008; William 2003; Markham 1998). Although it had been suggested that grounded theory is suitable (Fernback 1997), established work in the social science of cybercommunities could not be found. The thesis uses a re-engineered grounded theory approach as the basis for empirical work. The methodology of grounded theory is commonly used to develop theory that is grounded in data, which is systematically gathered and analysed (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Theory generation involves a process of research, which consists of integrating simultaneously, inductive data collection and deductive data analysis, informing each other throughout the research process (Glaser & Strauss 1967). With this in mind, grounded theory embodies the sense that the researcher is reflexively thinking about the data while collecting them. In the situation when little is known about deviance in cybercommunities, grounded the-

ory allows concepts and hypotheses to emerge from data in the first stage of empirical work and be tested against the research field in the next stage. This way, knowledge about deviance in the research field is reflexively revised in the light of new information. By using grounded theory, it is hoped that a conceptual framework promoting a better understanding of deviance in cybercommunities would emerge.

However, while considering the applicability of a grounded theory approach in this research, two problems are immediately apparent. Firstly, as a result of a split between the two originating theorists, there are contested ideas regarding whether a grounded theory approach should allow the use of: a pre-existing conceptual framework; a review of exiting literature on the subject matter; and data sources other than interview. Secondly, in its original form, grounded theory does not allow formal theoretical concepts to describe the relationship between theory and empirical work — an important aspect of this research, due to the use of Giddens' theories of modernity. Consequently, the actual methodology couples a grounded theory approach with adaptive theorising to accommodate the nature of this research. This approach allows for the presence of an existing theoretical framework, which is then reflexively adapted in relation to empirical data during the research process, reconfiguring itself by accommodating new information and interpretations (Layder 1998).

Regarding research method, it is a challenge to implement any social science research method in an environment where daily communications and interactions are carried out *exclusively* via various forms of abstract technological systems. The actual implementations of social research methods, are dependent on knowledge that is continuously revised in relationship to new experiences obtained during the process of empirical research. During this process, several social science research methods, including participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a Second Life residential forum, are used and re-engineered to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

In selecting the research field, both technological capabilities and social characteristics of various cybercommunities are considered. The selection process is guided by a sociological framework with four 'dimensions', namely: *modernity, technology, community* and *the individual*.

Second Life is selected as the field for empirical research, because it is one of the most, if not the most, advanced cybercommunity, both technologically and sociologically. Its unique sociological and technological structures may provide diverse and rich data. Constituted by thousands of user-defined sub-communities with varying social themes, sociologically, Second Life has participants of different age groups, genders, nationalities and social backgrounds. Technologically, Second Life's 3D graphics and 'n-th' degree

avatar creation technologies may enable better self creation, identification and social immersion, therefore, generating various kinds of more advanced human activities, including deviant ones. Following all these, Second Life may be perceived as an exemplar of modernity. The creation of such a cybercommunity may be construed as an evidence of the suggestion — the rise of cybercommunities is a direct consequence of modernity.

The strategy for empirical research consists of three different stages:

The Empirical Research Strategy		
Stage	Social Science Research Method	Timeline
1	Participant Observation	July 20, 2007 — February 1, 2008
2	Questionnaire	April 5, 2008 — June 1, 2008
3	Discussion in a Residential Forum	March 4, 2009 — March 8, 2009

Participant observation is designed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the Second Life community, including its technological infrastructure and social characteristics. In order to locate some main research themes and sketch practical research methods for subsequent empirical work. Special attention is paid to activities that may be construed as deviant by different individuals in Second Life, as well as, methods of communication in the cybercommunity.

In approaching this research, through participant observation, there appear to be four main themes: *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity*. These four themes serve to focus the empirical investigation.

Behaviours in Second Life are products of social, cultural and technical contexts and their meanings are created as they occur. With this in mind, the first of these four main themes is *norm*. Second Life is a user-defined cybercommunity constituted by thousands of sub-communities with varying social themes. Each of these sub-communities may have its local norms and Second Life as a cybercommunity may have its global norms. Consequently, different groups of people may respond to these different systems of norms differently, forming a complex power structure. Thus, the second main theme is *power*. Individuals in different positions of power may have different interpretations of the same activity in Second Life, resulting in disparate perceptions of deviance. No matter how diverse the systems of norms and complicated power structures are, it is the individual participants who need to make sense of them.

In Second Life, individual participants have to create 3D avatars to represent themselves. All kinds of activities, including the deviant ones, are carried out by these participants manipulating their avatars via specific instructions. With this in mind, individual participants' identification with, and attachment to, their avatars may shape their relationship

with Second Life. For this reason, the third theme is individual participants' *self-identity*.

Second Life may be considered as a natural ground where deviant activities manifest because of three main reasons: firstly, Second Life has highly complicated systems of norms that may sometimes work against one another, resulting in a situation where even generally accepted activities may be considered as deviant in some specific sub-communities; secondly, no one can be physically hurt by deviant activity, or physically punished for performing deviant activity in Second Life; and, thirdly, anonymity, one of the fundamental attractions of cybercommunities, is connected with the lowering of social inhibition (Lemert 1972), which may result in increased levels of deviance.

With all these in mind, why do participants obey the norms at work in Second Life, be they deviant or not? Following this, an analysis of conformity may reveal some insights into the nature of deviance in Second Life. Hirschi's social bonding theory² appears to provide an appropriate approach to address this question. Based on the central question of *Why do individuals obey the rules of society?*, social bonding theory takes deviance for granted and offers an explanation for conformity (Hirschi 1969). This theoretical position appears to coincide with the previous possible interpretation that Second Life is a natural ground where deviant activities manifest. It is important to note that this thesis uses the theoretical position of social bonding theory to facilitate an analysis of deviance in Second Life, not the full theory. With this in mind, *conformity* is chosen as the fourth main theme. Moreover, the analysis of conformity, as the last theme, is reflexively constructed from issues emerging in the discussion of the previous three themes, as knowledge is continuously revised in the light of incoming information. In discussing the notion of conformity, many issues that emerged through the discussions of the previous three themes are put into the context of an established criminological position. In this way, the criminological importance of the four themes are revised.

Moreover, the participant observation, coupled with other sources online and offline, lead to the identification of 91 different (potentially) deviant acts and 39 different motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life. The 91 acts are grouped into 8 categories, as follows:

1. Acts against the avatar
2. Acts against an avatar's property
3. Acts against an avatar's identity & privacy
4. Acts that damage Second Life community

²Hirschi's (1969) control theory is referred to as social bonding theory in this thesis to distinguish it from early control theories and self-control theory.

5. Acts against Second Life community norms
6. Acts against real world norms
7. Acts that are carried out by powerful groups
8. Acts that are performed via text & graphic

The 39 different motivations are grouped into 5 categories, as follows:

1. Modernity
2. Community
3. Self-identity
4. Commerce
5. Leisure

In the second stage of the empirical work, all these ideas on acts and motivations are translated into three questionnaires, as follows:

1. Opinion Survey of Residents on the Nature of Deviance in Second Life
2. Residential Survey on the Experience of Deviance in Second Life
3. Residential Self Report on the Performance of Deviance in Second Life

These three questionnaires are sent out to three randomly selected populations to investigate their perception, experience and performance of those 91 different acts in Second Life. Moreover, information concerning community attachment, avatar creation and identification are also gathered during the participant observation and translated into a set of demographic questions.

The data collected via these three questionnaires and discoveries from this data are a milestone in the research process, providing a great deal of information and insights into deviance in Second Life. Based on this improved understanding, 16 questions are drafted and posted in a Second Life residential forum to initiate a discussion among participants in the forum. The qualitative data collected from this discussion in the residential forum has further validated and explained the quantitative data collected by the questionnaire research.

In the final analysis of deviance in Second Life, both quantitative and qualitative data from the two empirical stages are used simultaneously to support a structured account of deviance in Second Life. In this account, Giddens' theories of modernity and the four

main theoretical themes (norm, power, self-identity and conformity) are revised in the light of the data to provide an understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life under the conditions of modernity.

This thesis aims to provide a better understanding of deviance in cybercommunities by examining the reflexive relationship between cybercommunities and the modern world, with Giddens' theories of modernity. Perhaps, cybercommunities are considered as natural grounds where deviant activities manifest frequently, because of some wider social concerns born out of, and associated with, the conditions of modernity. Under the conditions of modernity, activities in Second Life are linked to distant activities in the real world in such a way that events in Second Life may be shaped by happenings in the real world and vice versa (Giddens 1990). A research on the nature of deviance in Second Life may contribute to a better understanding of the nature of deviance in the modern world. Giddens' theories of modernity form an abstract theoretical framework, which places the research in a particular theoretical position: to analyse the relevance for criminology of the general social theory of Giddens. This approach, in itself, is important, because in criminology, 'general social theory' (GST) is not explored as fully as might have been hoped (Bottoms 2008).

1.2 Mapping the thesis

The primary objectives of this thesis, therefore, are, firstly, to identify the reflexive relationship between deviance in cybercommunities and the modern world and, secondly, to explore the nature of deviance in Second Life.

The most obvious problem in the study of crime related to the Internet is the absence of standard and consistent definitions. Various terms have been loosely associated with Internet-related crime.³ In academic circles, the term *cybercrime* is widely used. To locate this research in current criminological debates over Internet-related crime, a brief discussion of the much contested field of cybercrime is provided. A historical account of the intimate relationship between technology and society, specially that of Internet technologies and modern society, is provided to help categorise the set of deviant activities connected with the Internet. This set of deviant activities is classified into three different categories based on three different roles of technology:

1. Technological tool crime: traditional crimes in which the computer and Internet technologies are used as tools.

³For example, "computer-related crime, technological crime, high-technology crime, economic crime, technology-based crime, new age crime, computer and Internet-related crime, computer-assisted crime, high tech crime, digital crime, electronic crime, etc". (McQuade 2006, p. 15).

2. Technological system crime: crimes that are committed to take advantage of the fact that systems of Internet technologies are firmly integrated within various systems, institutions and organisations.
3. Technological culture deviance: deviant activities that occur in new contexts of cyberculture.

This categorisation serves two purposes, firstly, it separates clearly deviance from crime by distinguishing culture from tools and systems and, secondly, it places the research on deviance in cybercommunities firmly in the third category.

The thesis investigates the nature of deviance in the cybercommunity Second Life by exploring the reflexive relationship between Second Life and the modern world, with Giddens' theories of modernity. In short, this thesis uses Giddens' theories of modernity to illuminate and analyse a criminological problem: deviance in cybercommunities. To accomplish this, a basic account of Giddens' theories of modernity is provided to situate this research in the broader theoretical context of the 'general social theory' (GST) of Giddens.

As already noted, this chapter, consequently, serves three objectives: firstly, to provide a basic account of the thesis; secondly, to describe the structure of the thesis; and, thirdly, to situate the research of deviance in cybercommunities in the broader field of Internet technologies related crime and 'general social theory' (GST) of Giddens.

Following on Chapter One (*Introduction*), especially the basic account of Giddens' theories of modernity, Chapter Two (*Cybercommunity and Deviance in the Age of Modernity*) sets out the main theoretical notions in this thesis, namely: *modernity*, *cybercommunity* and *deviance*, as well as, the dynamic relationships among these notions. Modernity in itself is the subject of various theories. In this thesis, Giddens' theories of modernity are chosen to be used as a set of analytical tools.

There is much debate over whether cybercommunities can be considered as communities (e.g., Williams 2006a & b; Wittel 2001; Miller & Slater 2000; Markham 1998; Healy 1997; Mnookin 1996). This thesis provides an appreciation of the cybercommunity as a new form of community, based on an understanding of the modern discourse of community; a notion of community that emphasises its supportive roles to individuals and its nature as a source for security and belonging; and an analysis of the reasons behind individuals' participation in cybercommunities. The first section of Chapter Two focuses on the relationship between modernity and cybercommunity. It sets up the key idea that cybercommunities are extreme products of modernity. This idea is then supported by an analysis of some individuals' participations in cybercommunities, us-

ing Giddens' theories of modernity. This analysis is separated into two stages. Firstly, several fundamental characteristics of cybercommunities are discussed in relation to Giddens' theories of modernity, accentuating the idea that cybercommunities are extreme products of modernity. Secondly, this idea is explained from the point of an individual's self identity and through relating the individual's participation in cybercommunities to various forces of modernity.

The second section of Chapter Two gives an introduction to the research area of deviance in cybercommunities. This section explains the use of the term deviance in the thesis; the association between this terminology and the problematisation of crime; and a brief account of deviant activities in the context of cybercommunities. In this thesis, instead of the term crime, the term deviance is used, because of its lack of legal connotations and close association with social norms. The shift in the definition of crime from legal violation, to norm infraction, to social labelling, is discussed to support the use of this term. Deviance in cybercommunities is created by the process of participants' perceptions, and applications of these perceptions to activities and labelling them as deviant. With this in mind, the main focus of this research is to investigate what sorts of acts are seen as deviant in the research field of Second Life, as well as, the social characteristics that have given these acts the meaning of being deviant. Therefore, prior to entering the research field, this chapter provides a review of key current English-language research on deviant activities in cybercommunities to present a basic idea of the kinds of activities that the empirical research may focus on.

In Chapter Three (*Grounded Theory in a Cybercommunity: A Reflexive Methodology*), attention is turned to the methodology and methods used in this research. This research uses a re-engineered grounded theory approach for three different reasons, firstly, this approach allows for a flexible research design that is essential for exploratory research; secondly, it brings out the fundamental characteristic of this research — the especially intimate relationship between theory and empirical work; and, thirdly, it is concerned with the process of research, which is central to the conceptualisation of a cybercommunity and the nature of deviance in the cybercommunity.

Chapter Three provides an reflexive account of the research process. The main body of this chapter is separated into two sections. The first section explains the relationship between theory and empirical work in this research; the use of the re-engineered grounded theory approach; and the theory-guided search for the research site of Second Life. This research is a continuing dialogue between theory and empirical work. Giddens' theories of modernity are used as a set of analytical tools to guide the research before and during the research process, as well as, to make sense of the empirical data. This research

couples a grounded theory approach with adaptive theorising to bring about the interpretative relationship between theory and empirical work. Adaptive theory consists of simultaneously two fundamental properties, firstly, the presence of an existing theoretical framework which has a relatively durable form, because it adapts reflexively rather than automatically in relation to empirical data and, secondly, this theoretical framework should never be regarded as immutable, because it is capable of accommodating new information and interpretations by reconfiguring itself (Layder 1998). Second Life is selected to be the site of inquiry using a framework mapping cybercommunities from a sociological perspective. The framework has four 'dimensions', namely: *modernity*, *technology*, *community* and *the individual*. In principle, this framework is applicable to cybercommunities in general. However, during the process of evaluating and selecting cybercommunities, there are also various practical issues that play a very important role.

The first section of Chapter Three also presents the two research questions:

- How is deviance constituted in Second Life? What, if anything, is the relationship between deviance in real life and Second Life?
- How do deviant activities manifest themselves in Second Life?

The second section accounts for the research methods used, namely: participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a Second Life forum. Although the environment of a cybercommunity is significantly different from all real life settings, it is established as a context for social research (e.g., Boellstorff 2008; Williams 2006a & 2003; Hines 2005 & 2000; Markham 1998). Nevertheless, in a cybercommunity, real world social research methods must be modified with regards to the vastness of research populations, anonymous research subjects, multiple field sites and advanced computer technologies within these field sites (cf. Williams 2003). The processes of re-engineering the social research methods of participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a residential forum, are described. The general principle of the empirical work is to take full advantage of the advanced technologies available in Second Life where appropriate. Moreover, some ethical considerations concerning carrying out empirical research in a cybercommunity are discussed in the last part of this section.

Chapter Three, therefore, not only describes the methodology and methods employed in this research, but also highlights one of the primary challenges for this research — presenting theory and empirical work together in a coherent way.

Following on Chapter Three, Chapter Four (*Observing Second Life: Structure, Community and Deviance*) is built around a reflexive account of social interactions gathered

through the first stage of the empirical work: participant observation. Participant observation is designed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the Second Life community, including its technological infrastructure and social characteristics, in order to locate some main research themes and sketch practical research methods for subsequent empirical work. Special attention is paid to various kinds of activities and methods of communication in Second Life. During the research process of observing and portraying Second Life, there appear to be four main themes, namely: *norm*, *self-identity*, *power* and *conformity*. Each of these themes seems to be able to explain some aspects of the nature of deviance in Second Life. The main body of this chapter is separated into two sections. The first section consists of a basic portrait of Second Life from three different aspects, namely: its origin and development, people and community, as well as, geography and governance. The second section consists of a basic account of deviance in Second Life via an analysis of the four themes identified through observing and portraying Second Life.

Chapter Four, subsequently, serves three purposes: empirically, it provides a vivid description of Second Life; methodologically, it highlights that Second Life has many unique characteristics, therefore, without a substantial period of observation, subsequent research methods formulated might not be suitable in the environment; and, theoretically, being in the field has allowed for the identification of the four themes of norm, power, self-identity and conformity. These four themes are used to facilitate the design of research tools for succeeding stages of empirical work and guide the analysis of data collected, heightening the relationship between theory and empirical work.

Finally, in Chapter Five (*Understanding Deviance in Second Life*), the thesis moves towards a more structured account of deviance in Second Life. The discussions and themes that are the subjects of the previous chapters, are recalibrated in the light of data collected to generate an in-depth understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life. This chapter is divided into four sections, each of these sections is centred around one of the four themes identified in Chapter Four, namely: *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity*. In each section, some notions in Giddens' theories of modernity are used to examine the reflexive relationship between Second Life and the real world.

The popular perception that Second Life is a natural ground where deviant activities manifest frequently, is examined throughout this chapter. This perception is brought about by three main characteristics of Second Life in particular and of cybercommunities in general: firstly, Second Life has multiple systems of norms, therefore, every action is potentially considered to be deviant by some individuals; secondly, there is a lack of physicality in Second Life, therefore, nobody can be physically hurt by deviant

activities, or punished for performing deviant activities; and, thirdly, individuals' real world identities are often kept anonymous in Second Life, which directly leads to deviant behaviour.

The discussion of *norm* begins with a brief account of what current research on cybercommunities seems to suggest — the increased levels of deviant activities in some cybercommunities is partly brought about by the difficulty in maintaining individuals' bonds to community (Williams 2006a). In contrast to this suggestion, in the context of this research, the data on the motivation behind individuals' participation in Second Life reveals that although different individuals participate in Second Life for different reasons, to bond with other individuals is one of the primary reasons behind individuals' participation in Second Life. The data on individuals' perception of deviance in Second Life reveals that Second Life has multiple systems of values, which makes the environment where every act is potentially deviant to some people. With these two sets of data in mind, it is suggested that there may not be a huge amount of 'real' deviance in Second Life. Second Life may have an image of deviance, because there are more different systems of norms at work in this cybercommunity than most communities in the real world.

Following this suggestion, in the discussion of *power*, the data on individuals' experience and performance of deviance reveals that deviant activities do not manifest frequently in Second Life. A possible interpretation of this data is provided through an analysis of Giddens' notion of time-space distanciation. It has been argued that the rise of Second Life and individuals' interest in this cybercommunity are intimately associated with Giddens' four institutional dimensions of modernity, namely: *capitalism*, *industrialism*, *surveillance* and *military*. Second Life, therefore, is inherently globalising and can be seen as an exemplar of modernity. Although the lack of physicality in relationships has reached a new height in Second Life, it is not a unique characteristic restricted to this cybercommunity. In the real world, local characteristics of place are also thoroughly invaded by, and reorganised in terms of, distanciated social relations. In short, intimacy can be sustained at distance. Therefore, Second Life is not a world of strangers. It is a place where the disembedding and reembedding of social relations are carried out in an extreme form. In such an environment, individuals may have a more relaxed attitude towards what is commonly thought of to be deviant than many communities in the real world, but it does not necessarily mean deviant activities frequently occur in Second Life.

The discussion of *self-identity* reveals the association between Second Life and the real world at the level of the individual. A radically different interpretation of the notion

of anonymity is provided to challenge the perception — individuals are anonymised in Second Life, which leads to deviant activities. Actually, individuals' subjective identities may be anonymised in the real world, therefore, they participate in Second Life to be known as whom they really are. Following this suggestion, a thorough analysis of Giddens' notion of reflexivity reveals that an individual's self-identity is a process continuously produced and reproduced as a part of the individual's reflexive and routinised activities, including his/her activities in Second Life. Thus, deviance in Second Life is not only harmful within this cybercommunity. Deviance in Second Life may have personal and social harm in the much broader context of the real world.

Following the previous discovery that Second Life is a community where deviance does not manifest frequently, the discussion of *conformity* examines why individuals would obey the norms and rules in Second Life. The examination is divided into two parts, bond and control. Firstly, the theme of bond addresses the emotional bonds between individuals and the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, individuals in Second Life. Secondly, the theme of control evolves around the technologies of control in Second Life, as well as, the relationship between these technologies of control and Giddens' notion of risk. It is suggested that deviance in Second Life does not manifest frequently, because of the intimate bond between individuals and the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, individuals in the cybercommunity. In a cybercommunity where every single activity is carried out by technology, it is natural to assume that deviant activities in this context can be effectively dealt with by technology. However, a close look into the regulation of Second Life reveals that it is the power of relationship, instead of the control of technology, that is used to bring individuals together, and conform to the norms and rules in Second Life. Following this, the discussion is naturally turned to the increasing adoption of technologies in policing and the questionable effectiveness of these technologies. Giddens' notion of risk alongside an understanding of actuarialism provide an understanding of this increasing adoption of technologies in policing. This notion of risk also explains the inherently questionable effectiveness of technology as a regulator and, more specifically, the socially constructed nature of deviance in Second Life.

Each of these four sections described above makes its own contribution to the main theme — the deviance in cybercommunities may not necessarily mean any 'real' deviance in these communities, but reflects some wider social anxieties born out of, and associated with, the conditions of modernity.

Chapter Six (*Conclusion*) concludes the thesis. The chapter provides a coherent summary of this thesis.

1.3 Situating the thesis

Currently, various Internet related technologies have generated new forms of human communication and interaction, bringing about new types of economic activities, social behaviours and even new social structures. Along with these, advances in technologies have also given rise to a new criminological phenomenon — Internet related crime. While it is difficult to qualify the nature and extent of Internet related crime, it is obvious that it covers a wide range of online activities from eavesdropping telecommunications systems to electronic terrorism. Actually, Internet related crime is of such theoretical and empirical complexity, the derivation of a standard definition and crime type coverage is very difficult.

This research aims to explore deviance in cybercommunities. Although there is research dedicated to investigate deviance in cybercommunities (e.g., Williams 2006a & b; 2005; 2004; 2003; 2001) this field is in an early stage. One of the purposes of this section is to situate the research on deviance in cybercommunities in the much wider and more well researched field of Internet related crime. The lack of a standard definition is the most immediate problem in the research on Internet related crime. In academic circles, although the term cybercrime is used widely to cover the set of criminal activities that is Internet related, it is defined differently by different individuals. In the first part of this section, current academic debates over the definition and criminality of cybercrime are discussed. In the second part, a historical account of the intimate relationship between technology and society, especially that of Internet technologies and modern society is provided. The set of Internet related deviant activities is classified into three different categories based on the three different roles mentioned earlier at the beginning of Section 1.2 (*Mapping the thesis*).

1.3.1 Cybercrime and cyberspace

Although the term cybercrime has no origin nor reference point in law, in the UK or US, it is widely used in academic circles. Here are three examples of “definitions”:

- “computer-mediated activities which are either illegal or considered illicit by certain parties and which can be conducted through global electronic networks” (Thomas and Loader 2003, p. 3);
- “the use of computers or other electronic devices via information systems to facilitate illegal behaviours” (McQuade 2006, p. 2);
- “crimes which are mediated by networked technology” (Wall 2007, p. 11).

Although different individuals define cybercrime differently, they seem to agree on the significant role of networked technologies in enabling this type of criminal activity. Thomas and Loader's (2003) definition is broader than the rest. The definition not only includes illegal computer-mediated activities, but also illicit ones. Actually, many activities that have been categorised under the big umbrella of cybercrime do not have, at least, clear legal status, such as cyber vandalism, cyber violence and cyber rape. Perhaps, these activities may be more appropriately described as deviant behaviours in cyberspace rather than cybercrime.

Actually, many have questioned whether behaviours that have been categorised under the umbrella of cybercrime are new forms of criminal activities in need of a new theory or the same as terrestrial crime (e.g., Yar 2006; Brenner 2001; Capeller 2001; Grabosky 2001; Snyder 2001; Wall 1999). Wall (2001) suggests that cybercrimes differ from traditional criminal activities in a number of distinctive ways: (i) they are mostly free of a physical time frame, trans-jurisdictional and instantaneous (Johnson & Post 1996); (ii) there are contentious values to inform a general opinion regarding legal enforcement of cybercrime (Wall 1997); (iii) they require considerable technical knowledge to perform; (iv) there is no one set of consensual values about what does or what does not constitute a cybercrime; and (v) discussion of cybercrimes tends to be largely offence based not victim based. In Grabosky's opinion virtual criminality is the same as terrestrial crime: "some of the manifestations are new. But a great deal of crime committed with or against computers differs only in terms of the medium" (Grabosky 2001, p. 243). The medium, in this case, the technology of implementation may be unprecedented, especially in terms of efficiency, yet the crime is fundamentally familiar (Grabosky 2001). Capeller (2001) suggests that virtual criminality sustains continuity in the criminal field and, at the same time, generates discontinuity — human activities and relations within cyberspace have enabled changes in behaviour patterns that are discontinuous in the criminal field. Meanwhile, the traditional forms of criminal activities continue to exist (e.g., organised crime), assuring continuity. For Capeller (2001) cyberspace sustains continuity in criminal patterns by being a tool/support of criminal actions, but simultaneously, it generates discontinuity by presenting itself as a true autonomous environment in which systemic and abstract criminal actions are spreading.

Wall (2007) suggests that there are three different generations of cybercrime, each of these is distinctive and the conceptual differences between them can be used to explain current differences in the scope of criminal opportunity. The computer is used to assist traditional offending in the first generation of cybercrime, which "took place within discrete computing systems and was mainly characterized by the criminal exploitation of mainframe computers and their discrete operating systems" (Wall 2007, p. 44). The

first generation of cybercrime usually involves the acquisition of money or the destruction or appropriation of restricted information⁴ (Wall 2007). Although this generation of cybercrime involves the use of the computer and sometimes, even the Internet, these technologies are used to support traditional offences that predate them.

The second generation of cybercrimes are committed across networks (Wall 2007). These crimes are 'hybrid': the Internet has opened up new opportunities across global networks for traditional forms of criminal activities, such as a global trade in pornography (Wall 2001). Trans-jurisdictional procedures are often required to attend to this generation of cybercrimes. However, these procedures may not be readily available, which makes dealing with this generation of cybercrimes highly problematic. The global trade in pornography is a good example, because nations tend to have different standards on the legality of adult pornographic material (Wall 2001). The trans-national/jurisdictional nature of the second generation of cybercrimes may be understood as exemplifying the characteristics of modern social practices: disembedded and distanced from place-based contexts and re-embedded in abstract systems (e.g., the global network, as well as, international treaties to manage trans-national cybercrime) (cf. Giddens 1990). This is made possible, of course, by increasingly globally linked networks of computers.

The third generation of cybercrimes, known as 'true cybercrimes', are the sole product of opportunities created by the Internet: these criminal activities would disappear if the Internet is eliminated, e.g., spamming (Wall 2007 & 2001). This generation of cybercrime consists of many different Internet technology related activities. Some of these activities have clear criminal status, some of them are subjects of ongoing legal debates, others are considered as deviant by some individuals. Spamming exemplifies the process of a much contested deviant act becoming an illegal act, in both US and EU law, as well as, many other jurisdictions. The ongoing battle of illegal downloading between the music and movie industries and downloaders, not only gives rise to evaluations in the role of law, in shaping the future of contemporary popular culture (Carey & Wall 2001), but also evidences the impact that Internet technologies have on legal matters. These established areas of inquiry presage some of the terrain within which the analyses in this research are developed.

At the extreme end of the third generation of cybercrime, there exist activities that confront the current criminal justice system by not having any legal status. Furthermore, these activities break the relationship between time and space by distancing

⁴'Salami fraud' is a good example of the first generation of cybercrime. The "collect-the-roundoff" trick is a classic example of a salami fraud, in which a criminal steals money a bit at a time by modifying arithmetic routines, such as interest computations (see: <http://www.networkworld.com/newsletters/sec/2002/01467137.html>; accessed 17/11/08).

it across the global network and reemerged it in virtual contexts of online communities that challenge traditional understandings of the concept of community. These activities performed via text and other digital performances, range from minor exchange, such as flaming⁵ (Joinson 2003) to more serious altercations, such as virtual vandalism (Williams 2006a) and cyber rape (MacKinnon 1997). These activities can be described as deviant activities in cybercommunities — the focus of this research.

A discussion of cybercrime would naturally lead to an account of the medium of virtual criminality — cyberspace. The word ‘cyberspace’ was first coined by science fiction novelist William Gibson and appeared in his novel *Neuromancer* (1984).⁶ Gibson later comments on the origin of the term cyberspace in his documentary *No Maps for these Territories* (2000), saying that the word cyberspace seemed like an effective buzzword: it was suggestive of something, but had no real semantic meaning (Gibson 2000).

Meaningless or not, the word cyberspace entered the public lexicon and became a de facto synonym for the Internet, especially in academic circles and activist communities. In new media, it is often used as a metaphor to describe a “sense of a social setting that exists purely within a space or representation and communication... it exists entirely within a computer space, distributed across increasingly complex and fluid networks” (Slater 2002, p. 355). John Perry Barlow, the founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF),⁷ uses cyberspace to refer to the present day nexus of computer and telecommunications in his essay *Crime and Puzzlement* (1990).⁸ Benedikt understands cyberspace as “a new universe, a parallel universe created and sustained by the world’s computers and communications lines. A world in which the global traffic and knowledge, secrets, measurements, indicators, entertainments, and alter-human agency takes on forms: sights, sounds, presence never seen on the surface of the earth blossoming in a vast electronic light” (Benedikt 1991, p. 29).

Including its political and military back stories, the origin and development of the In-

⁵Heated debates on message boards that are spelled in capital letters.

⁶“Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding... ” (Gibson 1984, p. 67).

⁷See: <http://www.eff.org/>; accessed 14/11/2008.

⁸“In this silent world, all conversation is typed. To enter it, one forsakes both body and place and becomes a thing of words alone. You can see what your neighbors are saying (or recently said), but not what either they or their physical surroundings look like. Town meetings are continuous and discussions rage on everything from sexual kinks to depreciation schedules. Whether by one telephonic tendril or millions, they are all connected to one another. Collectively, they form what their inhabitants call the Net. It extends across that immense region of electron states, microwaves, magnetic fields, light pulses and thought which sci-fi writer William Gibson named Cyberspace” (Barlow 1990).

ternet and its associated technologies have many milestones in its 40 year history. The Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) linked four American universities in 1969, serving as a tool to mobilise research resources in the university world. From then on, the network technology began to be an external facilitator of human lives, especially lives of academic researchers and technologists. Throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s, computers were developed for personal use and could be connected by phone-in Local Area Networks (LANs). The precursor of various public forums and online communities took form of the Computerised Bulletin Board Systems (CBBCs) which were first created in 1978. At that time, the Internet was not available to most computer users, the users of CBBSs had to use a modem to dial to CBBSs directly. During the 1980s, various independent networks had been launched for different purposes, such as Because It's Time NETwork (BITNET) and Computer Science Network (CSNET). In 1981, the creations of Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP) led to one of the first definitions of the *internet* as a connected set of networks (Hafner & Lyon 1996). In 1984, marked by the introduction of the Domain Name System (DNS) and the allocation of more than 1,000 hosts for the system, the Internet became a technological system (Castells 2001). From then on, its influence started to penetrate various political, economic and social organisations. More importantly, since the general privatisation and commercialisation of the Internet, the network technology has been rapidly developing, expanding and repeatedly penetrating into our daily lives. Only six months after the release of the World Wide Web (WWW) on August 6, 1991, there were already 16 million users of computer communications networks worldwide; six years later, there were over 400 million users (Castells 2001, p. 3). Nowadays, the use of information technologies is a part of daily life for a growing number of people and organisations throughout the world.

1.3.2 On technology

Currently, the Internet and its associated technologies have accelerated social changes that have come to characterise modernity, particularly, the *discontinuities* that separate modern and traditional social orders. For example, the social orders which bind time and space have become disembedded and distanciated: "lifted out of local contexts of interaction and restructured across indefinite spans of time-space" (Giddens 1990, p. 14), transforming the relationships of production/consumption, power and experience (Castells 2000a & b). The fact that the word cyberspace has become a de facto synonym for the Internet is a dramatic example of the intimate relationship between technology and society. However, this intimate relationship between technology and society far predates the birth of the Internet and its associated technologies.

Generally, technology is heavily associated with tools and machines that may be used to achieve larger scale of practices, more efficiency and economy throughout human civilisation. From the Industrial Revolution to the 20th century, technologies, usually in the forms of large machines with manuals of instruction, have been commonly thought of as an external facilitator of human lives, propelling the process of modernisation. Berger et al. defined modernisation as “transformation of the world by technology” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 15). They further clarified the relationship between modernisation and technology: “modernization, then, consists of the growth and diffusion of a set of institutions rooted in the transformation of economy by means of technology” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 15).

During the process of modernisation, technology has transformed itself from being a tool, to a system, to a cultural force. Since the adaptation of large systematic technologies, the term technology could be understood as a system which consists of various physical components with complex and specific instructions that are formulated to solve problems or/and improve efficiency within a specific social context. Hughes (1989) understands the term *technological system* as a system that contains messy, complex and problem-solving components that are both socially constructed and society shaping. Technological systems could be classified into physical artifacts and human organisations (Hughes 1989). Physical artifacts include transformers and transmission lines in electric lights and power systems; human organisations include companies, banks, universities and legislative artifacts (e.g., regulatory laws) (Hughes 1989). This definition of technology has certainly extended the original understanding of it as tools/machines adopted by individuals to achieve large scale practices and more efficiency. Nevertheless, technology is still defined in terms of solving problems as a facilitator.

Arguably, the role of technology as a facilitator has been transformed by the creation and privatisation of the Internet. The Internet and its associated technologies, marked by their pervasiveness, has eventually redefined technology as an integral part of human life. With the rise of various social software,⁹ it is increasingly difficult to separate the technological from the social. It is indeed the social applications and implications of software that have enabled the Internet to be an integral part of human society. Ellul had provided a notion of technology-human integration long before the creation of the Internet — “... when technique enters into every area of life, including the human, it ceases to be external to man and becomes his very substance. It is no longer face to face with man but is integrated with him, and it progressively absorbs him” (Ellul 1964, p.

⁹Social software is normally known as a range of web-based software programs that allow users to interact and share data with other users, such as MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Amazon, eBay, the Well, Second Life, etc.

6).

Following this notion of technology, computer technologies could be naturally perceived as a cultural force. Actually, “Technology systems are socially produced. Social production is culturally informed. The Internet is no exception. The culture of the producers of the Internet shaped the medium” (Castells 2001, p. 36). Similar ideas may also be drawn from Bell’s writings: “while Dani Cavallaro (2000: xi) writes of cyberculture as ‘an environment saturated by electronic technology’, we need also to read those technologies themselves as cultural — to look at ‘ideas, experiences, and metaphors in their interaction with machines and material change’” (Bell 2001, p. 8). Indeed, the pervasiveness of the Internet and its associated technologies have not only enabled it to become an inseparable component of our daily lives, but also created a new culture, namely, cyberculture. Perhaps, there is no difference between cyberspace and cyber culture. Bell wrote: “Setting up a distinction between cyberspace and cyberculture is a false dichotomy, I think: cyberspace is always cyberculture, in that we cannot separate cyberspace from its cultural contexts” (Bell 2001, p. 8).

After acquiring an improved understanding of the intimate relationship between technology and society, especially the Internet and modern society, the set of deviant behaviours that are related to Internet technologies is classified into three categories, as mentioned in Section 1.2 (*Mapping the thesis*):

1. Technological tool crime: traditional crimes in which the computer/Internet technologies are used as tools.
2. Technological system crime: crimes that are committed to take advantage of the fact that systems of computer/Internet and related technologies are firmly integrated within various systems, institutions and organisations.
3. Technological culture deviance: deviant activities that occur in new contexts of cyberculture.

In the first category of offences, the technical capability of the Internet and its associated technologies is used to facilitate offending, whilst in the other two categories, the social contexts that are generated by the Internet and its associated technologies are used as breeding grounds for criminal offences and deviant behaviours.

In the first category, the term technology reflects the common understanding of it. It can be dated back to possibly 10,000 years ago, since the homo erectus’ creation of stone tools and is best reflected by the creation of various machines during the Industrial Revolution. Like any other form of technology, the Internet and its associated technologies

have become new tools for criminals to commit crime. Offences in this class include various kinds of serious organised crime, online pornography, online paedophilia, online drug trafficking, etc.

In the second category, the term technology deals with the accumulation of human knowledge, hence, may be very broadly interpreted. Technological systems include “organizations, such as manufacturing firms, utility companies and investment banks; they incorporate components usually labelled scientific, such as books, articles, as well as, university teaching and researching programs. Legislative artifacts, such as regulatory laws, can also be part of technological systems” (Hughes 1989, p. 51). This interpretation of technological systems may be understood as coinciding with Giddens’ concept of expert systems: “The system in which the knowledge of experts is integrated influence many aspects of what we do in a *continuous* way” (Giddens 1990, p. 27; emphasis in original). The trust one has towards various forms of expert system, such as the system of the law, the system of banking and the system of schooling, is based on reflexively applied knowledge, which “is the defining characteristic of all human action” (Giddens 1990, p. 36). Logically, if a system has served its purpose with a degree of consistency and accountability, it may become a standard way of performing certain task. For example, the system of schooling has become a customary approach of pursuing an education and most of us still have enough trust in the banking system to automatically assign financial value to a cheque. The second category of offences focus on the breach of these trusted systems which are related to the Internet and its associated technologies, including viruses, financial fraud, unauthorised access/system penetration, theft of information, network abuse, theft of intellectual property (e.g., piracy), Denial of Service attack (DoS), misuse of public web application, website defacement, etc. Most of these offences are business related since computerised technologies are widely adopted in the system of commerce and breaches of system security have resulted in huge amount of financial losses.

In the third category, the term technology is considered as a cultural force. The creation of cyberspace is an appropriate example of technology as a cultural force. The pervasiveness of the Internet and its associated technologies have enabled it to not only become an intrinsic part of our daily lives, but also create a new culture — cyberculture. Most of these activities that may be covered by this category, do not have, at least, clear legal status, such as cyber violence, cyber rape, cyber vandalism, cyber stalking, etc. This category of activities, therefore, demands different appraisals of the concepts of crime and community. In the first two categories, activities are defined as crime based on legal definitions of various government bodies. In the third category, perhaps, it may be more appropriate to define these unwanted acts as deviant behaviours, especially

since different online communities have various criteria for determining whether an act is inappropriate based on the specific nature of each community. Moreover, in these communities, social orders that individuals take for granted in the really world, such as national, international jurisdictions and ‘normal’ laws — evaporate.

1.3.3 On modernity

This thesis makes an attempt to understand deviance in the cybercommunity Second Life by examining its relationship with the modern world. Actually, the modern world in itself is the subject of various theories, analysing it from different perspectives. Even in the narrower context of modern discourse of community, the meaning of modernity is not clearly explained. In general, “modernity refers to a specific historical period, beginning sometime during the succession of scientific, industrial, and political revolutions considered to usher in the modern age, and which lasted through at least the middle of the twentieth century” (Misa et al. 2003, p. 12). Some authors further distinguish ‘classic’, ‘high’, ‘low’, ‘late’, ‘post’ or ‘radicalised’ modernity (Harvey 1989; Lash & Friedman 1992; Scott 1998; Giddens 1991; respectively). Some interpretations of modernity not only restrict it to a historical period, but also a specific geographical location. Many major social transformations in the 19th and early 20th century have often been explained by the emergence of modernism — a cultural movement begun in the mid 19th century as a reaction against the contemporary European realist tradition.

With all these in mind, it might be more appropriate to perceive modernity as a set of conditions that characterises modern societies, cultures, institutions and human activities. The main focus should be to explore the distinctive characteristics of modernity that differ from those of the traditional order. Although modernity has divergent interpretations, in this thesis, to understand links between the modern world, cybercommunity and deviance, it is necessary to have some coherent account of modernity, if not a full theory. Giddens’ theories of modernity as seen in his *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) and later elaboration *Modernity and Self-identity* (1991), are adopted as a set of analytical tools to provide a potential analytical framework. It needs to be stressed that Giddens’ theories of modernity are used purely to help structure the ideas in this research. This research is not to test these theories.

In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens offers a concise answer to *What is modernity?*:

“At a first approximation, let us simply say the following: “modernity” refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less

worldwide in their influence” (Giddens 1990, p. 1). There are three features which separate modern social constructs from traditional social orders: (i) the sheer *pace of change* which the era of modernity sets into motion; (ii) the *scope of change* as social transformations are globally universal; (iii) the intrinsic *nature of modern institutions* which are simply not found in prior historical periods (Giddens 1990, p. 6; emphasis in original). Moreover, Giddens further indicates that in the late twentieth century, “it is argued by many that a new era has arrived” upon us, “taking us beyond modernity itself” into a new age “in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalised and universalised than before” (Giddens 1990, pp. 1-3).

Giddens suggests that

“The dynamism of modernity derives from the *separation of time and space* and their recombination in forms which permit the precise time-space “zon-ing” of social life; the *disembedding* of social systems (a phenomenon which connects closely with the factors involved in time-space separation); and the *reflexive ordering and re-ordering* of social relations in the light of individuals and groups” (Giddens 1990, pp. 16-17; emphasis in original).

The separation of time from space has enabled the separation of space from place (Giddens 1990). In the pre-modern societies, space and place largely coincide, and the special dimensions of social life are mostly dominated by localised activities. Under the conditions of modernity, more locationally distant social relations (relations between people distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction) are fostered. This may be perceived as the materialisation of the disembedding of social systems: the lifting out “of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their reconstructing across indefinite spans of time-space” (Giddens 1990, p. 21). Therefore, *time-space distancing* is “The stretching of social systems across time-space, on the basis of mechanisms of social and system integration” (Giddens 1984, p. 377).

Various *expert systems* characterise the reconstruction across an infinite span of time-space. For Giddens expert systems are “systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organise large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today” (Giddens 1990, p. 27). For example, money “does not relate to time (or, more accurately, time-space) as flow, but precisely as a means of bracketing time-space by coupling instantaneity and deferral, presence and absence” (Giddens 1990, p. 25).

Giddens proposes that the difference between modernity and pre-modern or tradition

lies in the relation between modernity and reflexivity (Giddens 1990, pp. 36-45). Reflexivity is the process that “All human beings routinely “keep in touch” with the grounds of what they do as an integral element of doing it” (Giddens 1990, p. 36). Giddens names this “keeping in touch” as “reflexive monitoring of action” to emphasise the chronic character of the process involved (Giddens 1990, p. 36). In traditional culture, the past is honoured, because it contains and perpetuates the experience of generations, which is known as tradition. Human actions are heavily influenced by what have been done in the past. Under the conditions of modernity, three discontinuities separate modern social institutions from traditional orders: the fast pace of change, the large scope of change and the nature of modern institutions (Giddens 1990). Consequently, “social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character” (Giddens 1990, p. 38).

Giddens considers modernity as a double edged phenomenon: although the development of modern social institutions and their globalised spread have created many beneficent possibilities, modernity also has a darker side (Giddens 1990). An example of this darker side of modernity is the large-scale destructive potential the “forces of production” would have on individual creativity and autonomy (Giddens 1990, p. 8). Another example is the totalitarian possibilities contained within the institutional parameters of modernity. The emergence of modern nation-states have enabled totalitarian rule to connect to political, military and ideological power in more concentrated form than ever before (Giddens 1990). Moreover, the development of military power has brought about the “industrialisation of war” (Giddens 1990, p. 9). The invention of nuclear weaponry has made it a possible risk that a full superpower conflict might annihilate humanity altogether (Giddens 1990).

With all these in mind, perhaps, “The world in which we live today is a fraught and dangerous one” (Giddens 1990, p. 10). Faced with various social phenomena, the assumption that the emergence of modernity would lead to the formation of a happier and more secure social order needs to be qualified (Giddens 1990).

Giddens, of course, is talking about the real world. Throughout the research process, his theories are used to facilitate and structure an understanding of cybercommunities.

Chapter 2

Cybercommunity and Deviance in the Age of Modernity

This chapter sets out the main theoretical notions in this thesis, namely, cybercommunity and deviance, as well as, their inextricable association with modernity. Deviance is a consequence of an application of rules and sanctions to a person, instead of a quality of the action that the person commits (Becker 1963). An understanding of deviance, therefore, requires a specific community, since actions are given different meanings in different social contexts (Christie 2004). To investigate deviance in cybercommunities, an understanding of cybercommunity is necessary. In fact, there is much debate over whether cybercommunities can be qualified as communities (e.g., Williams 2006a & b; Lajoie 1996; Mnookin 1996; Nguyen & Alexander 1996). Following this, instead of providing a definition of community that simply includes cybercommunity, this thesis develops an appreciation of cybercommunity as a new type of community, by drawing on an understanding of the modern discourse of community, a notion of community that emphasises its supportive roles to individuals and its nature as a source for security and belonging, as well as, an analysis of the reasons behind individuals' participation in cybercommunities.

Giddens' theories of modernity are used as a set of analytical tools in the analyses of the notions of deviance and cybercommunity. For Giddens reflexivity rests at the heart of modernity:

“thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another... social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character” (Giddens 1990, p. 38).

Consequently, reflexively appropriated knowledge itself is open to uncertainty. This uncertainty is an inherent characteristic of cybercommunities and deviance within these

reflexively organised structures. Indeed, in giving a rational account of cybercommunities and deviance as in this thesis, one is actually constituting them and the social world in which one lives.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides an account of the idea that cybercommunities are extreme products of modernity. This idea is developed from two different perspectives, namely, community and self-identity. Firstly, the discussion focuses on a discourse analysis of community in relation to Giddens' theories of modernity. Secondly, the discussion focuses on relating an individual's self-identity when participating in a cybercommunity to various forces of modernity. The second section provides an introduction to the research area of deviance in cybercommunities. In this thesis, the notion of deviance is used instead of the notion of crime largely for its lack of legal connotations and close association with social contexts. Firstly, the notion of deviance is explained through a discussion of the problematisation of crime in the age of modernity. In the contemporary criminological discourse, there is a shift in the definition of crime from legal violation, to norm infraction, to social labelling. Following this, deviance in cybercommunities is a product of participants' perceptions and application of these perceptions to activities, as well as, the labelling of these activities as deviant. Secondly, a critical analysis of current English-language research on deviant activities in cybercommunity is provided to map this research more concretely.

2.1 Cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity

Drawing on ideas from Giddens (1991 & 1990) and Berger et al. (1974), cybercommunities may be interpreted as extreme products of modernity.

Many characteristics of modernity are exemplified in cybercommunities. Cybercommunities are products of technology and technology has made modernisation possible (Berger et al. 1974). Indeed, Berger et al. define modernisation as “transformation of the world by technology” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 15). Berger et al. consider technology and bureaucracy as the two primary carriers of modernity, which consists of “the growth and diffusion of a set of institutions rooted in the transformation of the economy by means of technology” (Berger et al. 1974, pp. 15-16). Perhaps, “no discussion of community today can be complete without some consideration of the role that technology plays in reshaping social relations” (Delanty 2003, p. 167). The emergence of cybercommunities has, to an extent, made McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) — a global community of communication — a social reality. In the past, technology was

seen as undermining community by bringing about different forms of organised institutional orders (e.g., Berger et al. 1974). However, when the notion of cybercommunity was first introduced, it was seen as an example of technological change and innovation having the ability to turn around the social and cultural decay in contemporary society (Rheingold 1993).

Indeed, in some influential theories of society, the modern world is interpreted as an uncertain and insecure place to live (e.g., Bauman 2001; Giddens 1991 & 1990). In the modern world, the conceived normative ideal of community and the notion of static self-identity have been challenged by the emergence of various social developments that have come to characterise modernity, resulting in a sense of restlessness (e.g., Bauman 2001; Bell 2001; Foster 2000; Hall 1995; Weeks 1995; Giddens 1991 & 1990; Foucault 1981; Berger et al. 1974). Bauman wrote: “We miss community because we miss security, a quality crucial to a happy life, but one which the world we inhabit is ever less able to offer and ever more reluctant to promise” (Bauman 2001, p. 144).

Actually, “Never was the word “community” used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life” (Hobsbawm 1994, p. 428). The difficulty in finding communities in real life may partly explain the birth and rise of cybercommunities. Moreover, there may be various possible reasons behind individuals’ participation in cybercommunities. These reasons may be explained by a sociological spectrum with two extreme ends. At one end, the cold scientific rationality of modernity and its structures and politics have generated an enduring sense of nostalgia for community as a source of security and belonging; at the other end, a growing sense of individualism has induced a demand for environments where the emancipation of self could be achieved. In Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*), these two extreme ends are explained as the pursuit of modernity and the retreat from modernity.

2.1.1 On cybercommunity

For over a decade, there has been much debate over whether cybercommunities should be defined as communities (e.g., Williams 2006a & b; Miller & Slater 2000; Markham 1998; Lajoie 1996; Mnookin 1996; Nguyen & Alexander 1996). Actually, the term community itself has mutable definitions that vary widely across different disciplines and among different individuals. Expressions of community that have been derived in the work of different disciplines and individuals, range in origin from utopian and alternative communities, through traditional villages and modern cities, to transnational communities and cybercommunities. Whatever the notion of community is, it involves human

interaction in numbers and locations outside the limits of the family and the local community. Perhaps, the notion of community being a highly topical contemporary issue can be seen as a response to the crisis in solidarity and belonging in the modern world. This crisis may be caused by some features that have come to characterise modernity. It is indeed an irony that to some individuals, cybercommunities may serve to alleviate this crisis in solitude and belonging caused by modernity.

Historically, community is often expressed in a utopian version of a pristine social bond, which is often perceived as a radical alternative to the prevailing political order prior to the American and French revolutions in the Western world. The ancient Greek polis is an example of a community that is absent of a state. The polis was built around the notion of citizenship, made up of independent peasant households that did not pay dues to, or depend on, the state for the means of life (Morris 1991). In a polis, politics was based on the voice of the individual participants and may sometimes be indistinguishable from friendship and participation in public life (Delanty 2003). Actually, the Greeks did not separate the social from the political, which Marx attributed to the achievement of capitalism. For this reason, many thinkers, such as Rousseau, Hegel and Marx romanticised the polis and considered it as a kind of normative critique of modernity. Actually, in the early modern thought, community and society are indistinguishable: both ideas may be interpreted as opposing to the organised realm of the state (cf. Delanty 2003).

For over a decade, many transformative developments relating to postmodernism, globalisation and the Internet have been challenging the concept of community in classical sociology and community studies. The discourse of community in the contemporary social and political situation, appears to be intimately related to an aspiration for belonging and a search for self-identity. With this in mind, an appreciation of cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity may depend on an understanding of the modern discourse of community.

Actually, the modern discourse of community can be symbolised by a coin with the loss of community on one side and the recovery of community on the other side (Cohen 1970). The loss of community entails the sentiment that the formation of nation-states as a characteristic of modernity has destroyed community. Therefore, the destruction of community may be interpreted as a consequence of modernity. The decline of the institutions of the Middle ages, the commercialisation of agriculture that came with the emergence of capitalisation, as well as, the decline in the autonomy of the cities as a result of the rise of the modern centralised state, led to the sense of the loss of community.

The idea of loss of community has been observed since the eighteenth century. In Rousseau's (1762) political philosophy, the human desire for freedom could only be expressed in

community. However, in modern times, the state had destroyed human freedom and political possibilities by replacing community (Rousseau 1762). This theme of loss can also be located in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). However, unlike Rousseau, Hegel does not see community entirely in terms of loss, instead the theme of the incompleteness of community is apparent in his social theory of modernity (Delanty 2003). Hegel's understanding of modernity society focuses on its failure to embody an 'ethical life' (*Sittlichkeit*) in institutions: a system of norms and morals belonging to a social body, made up of spheres of social interaction and interdependence in which all individual participants are embedded. Taylor interprets *Sittlichkeit* as "the moral obligations I have to an ongoing community of which I am part. . . the doctrine of *Sittlichkeit*, is that morality reaches its completeness in community" (Taylor 2008, pp. 376-377). For Hegel community can only be realised in a political form that does not distinguish between the political and the social. In modern times, 'ethical life', *Sittlichkeit* is destroyed by modernity as the state is separated from the social. Perhaps, Hegel saw the problem of modern society as the problem of the incompleteness of community. For Hegel the true state is "a *communitas communitatum* rather than the aggregate of individuals that the Enlightenment had held it to be" (Nisber 1967, p. 55).

If modernity destroys community then community must be recovered in a new form. The theme of recovery of what has been lost is the other side of the modern discourse of community. Actually, from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, there has been a rather consistent pursuit of a kind of utopian community. Some famous visions of different utopian communities, some bleak, some hopeful, include: Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1623), Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1629), James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). Perhaps, under the influence of these writings and the revolutionary tradition, the communal movements pursuing an alternative to the modernisation of Western civilisation has always been active.

These communal movements in the pursuit of an alternative to modernity are often materialised in a retreat from modern society. The Amish community and the Kibbutz community are examples of this kind of self-sufficient communities (Delanty 2003). For example, the Kibbutz is widely known for its co-operation, collective ownership, equality, consensual values and secular self-government: in sociological terms, for its voluntary, flexible and reflexively organised nature. Reducing the state to the social, this kind of alternative community offers a different model of social relation and institutional organisation from the normative framework brought about by modernity.

Perhaps, this pursuit of an alternative to modernity is also central to the birth and rise of cybercommunities. Actually, the birth and rise of cybercommunities may be interpreted as a recovering of community in cyberspace. Jones wrote: “Crucial to the rhetoric surrounding of the Internet... is the promise of a renewed sense of community and, in many instances, new types and formations of community” (Jones 1998, p. 3).

Perhaps, cybercommunities can be seen as a part of an established tradition, since their birth and rise is brought about by a persistent pursuit of an old utopian ideal. However, they are not traditional, since they are products of modernity. Moreover, the conscious search for an alternative to communities in the real world has been essential to the identity of cybercommunities. In Bauman’s *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, he wrote: “ ‘Community’ is nowadays another name for paradise lost — but one to which we dearly hope to return, and so we feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there” (Bauman 2001, p. 3). Perhaps, the remarkable thing about community is that ‘it always has been’ or ‘it is always in the future’ : “paradise lost or a paradise still hoped to be found; one way or another, this is definitely not a paradise that we inhabit and not the paradise that we know from our own experience” (Bauman 2001, p. 3).

The idea of cybercommunity was first introduced using the term of *virtual community* in Rheingold’s *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (1993) as a non-tangible space individuals choose for social interaction on a daily basis. For Rheingold (1993) virtual communities are rich and meaningful social formations that sustain the proliferation of social groups, they are entitled to being called communities.

Rheingold’s (1993) utopian perception of cybercommunity coincides with the consistent pursuit of a different kind of community from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. Fernback opposes the use of the term community to describe online social formations because “Community is a term, which seems readily definable to the general public but is infinitely complex and amorphous in academic discourse. It has descriptive, normative, and ideological connotations... [and] encompasses both material and symbolic dimensions” (Fernback 1997, p. 39). Castells considers the building of a definition of community as the necessary analytical step to understanding cybercommunity. He wrote: “Perhaps the necessary analytical step to understanding the new forms of social interaction in the age of the Internet is to build on a definition of community, de-emphasizing its cultural component, emphasizing its supportive role to individuals and families, and de-linking its social existence” (Castells 2001, p. 127).

Tönnie’s *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (Community and Society)* (1887) explores the historical changes in the organisation of social life that emerged under the conditions of modernity. *Gemeinschaft* (community) is characterised by natural will; guided by a

sense of the totality of the cultural past; and specified by an organic sense of community, fellowship, family, custom, understanding, consensus and language. *Gesellschaft* (society) is characterised by rational will; given means by a compelling sense of process and individualism; and charged with individualism. Therefore, people's interests, needs and desires become more individually rather than collectively driven, relations among people become more mechanical, transitory and contractually oriented. Hillery amasses 94 definitions of community in his *Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement* (1955). These definitions have two things in common: they all deal with people and they all presuppose physical place to be an inherent component in communities. Actually, many definitions of community have relied on notions of geographically based place: a physical 'where' that can be observed, visited, stayed and engaged in participant observation (Jones 1998). Thus, besides a common physical geographic place, individuals in a community may also share a common history, value system and, often, language and religion.

Cybercommunities exist in cyberspace. No one actually *lives* in cybercommunities. However, emphasising meaning rather than structure, community is also interpreted as symbolically constructed: a conglomeration of normative codes and values that provides community members with a sense of identity (Cohen 1985). Moreover, symbolically constructed community and physically shared community do not preclude each other: people are members of a multiplicity of communities simultaneously, including both symbolic and material community (Etzioni 1995). Cybercommunity is a good example of symbolically constructed community of meaning. Anderson proposes that all communities are imagined since "in the minds of each [community member] lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1983, p. 15). Although Anderson's work *Imaginary Communities* (1983) is primarily concerned with national identity, its main theoretical notion is to demonstrate that community is shaped by cognitive and symbolic structures that are not underpinned by 'lived' spaces and immediate forms of social intimacy. This notion of imaginary community has been at the heart of most definitions of cybercommunity. Rheingold (1993) and Baym (1995) argue that cybercommunity is a *real* entity that is given meaning by its participants and characterised by common value systems, norms, rules, the sense of identity, commitment and association. Reality is socially constructed, cybercommunities exist in the minds of participants; they exist because participants give them meaning. Williams' (2006a & b; 2005; 2004; 2003; 2001) research on deviance in the cybercommunity of *Activeworlds*¹ has successfully established the notion that cybercommunities should be considered as communities, because individual participants in the communities are attached to these contexts as such.

¹Activeworlds is a 3D cybercommunity. It is launched in 1997, six year prior to the launch of Second Life in 2003 (see: <http://www.activeworlds.com/overview.asp>; accessed 04/08/2009).

Besides the absence of a shared physical place, there are debates over the extent to which participants in a cybercommunity can have a shared history, value system, religion and language. Refusing to use the world community, Sennett (1998) coins the term *network sociality* to describe social relations that are mediated by computer networks. For Sennett (1998) relations online are devoid of trust, commitment and loyalty. Highlighting the difference between real world communities and online social formations, Wittel (2001) offers a less pessimistic interpretation of network sociality. Real world community involves strong long-lasting ties, proximity and a common history, whereas network sociality is based on information relations, exchanges of data and devoid of history (Wittel 2001).

Moreover, more than a decade ago, Lockard (1997) hesitated to use the term community to describe social formations in cyberspace, because of the small bandwidth for communication. Healy (1997) argued that participants of social formations in cyberspace were not obligated to deal with diversity, because only a small fraction of the world's population had access online. Currently, different online social formations are constructed for different purposes, by different kinds of computer technologies and have different social structures.

Markham's research (1998) has revealed that individual participants have different reasons for being in online social formations, different degrees of attachment and commitment to the formations and perceive these formations built by Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) technologies, differently. An online social formation may be seen as a 'tool' or a 'place' or a 'way of being'. Indeed, these different perceptions can be located on a continuum from a tool to a way of being, indicating an increasing connection between an individual participant and an online social formation (Markham 1998). Moreover, although exchanges in online social formations tend to be ephemeral, these exchanges are not necessarily merely informational (Miller & Slater 2000; Markham 1998). Actually, history and meaning are the basis of some online social formations (Miller & Slater 2000; Markham 1998). Williams' research demonstrates that participants who "spend significant amounts of time interacting with others online, who live a large part of their lives in 'virtual' spaces, and who recognise that actions online have *real* consequences, much like in the offline world, consider themselves to be part of a community" (Williams 2006b, p. 70; emphasis in original).

Moreover, cybercommunities exist not only in the minds of the participants, but also in the technological infrastructure created by computer software and images simulated by these software. Perhaps, there is no true distinction between 'virtual' community and 'real' community; or, at least, an analysis of potential differences between the 'virtual'

and 'real' is not adequate for an understanding of cybercommunities as requiring a different appreciation of community. Poster wrote: "the Internet and virtual reality open the possibility of new kinds of interactivity such that the idea of an opposition of real and unreal community is one not adequate to specify the differences between modes of bonding, serving instead to obscure the manner of the historical construction of forms of community" (Poster 1995, p. 35). Watson wrote: "The term 'virtual' means something akin to 'unreal' and so the entailments of calling online communities 'virtual' include spreading and reinforcing a belief that what happens online is like a community, but isn't really a community. My experience has been that people in the offline world tend to see online community as virtual, but the participants in the online communities see them as quite real" (Watson 1997, p. 129). Like any other communities, cybercommunities are nourished through language (Howard 1997), ritual (Hoover & Clark 2002; O'Leary 1996), by social legacy (Rheingold 1993) and via a community-generated system of punishment (Ross 1994) (cf. Williams 2006b). Actually, "People live in the world, and their practices have evolved in the world. Virtual worlds do not exist solely in some enclosed cyberspace: they exist in human culture, knowledge, and values as well" (Kellogg et al. 1991, p. 430).

Some ideas in Giddens' *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) may be able to facilitate an understanding of the relationship between cybercommunities and modernity. Actually, virtuality may be considered as a product of modernity, which "dis-places" the individual and makes place more "phantasmagoric" (Giddens 1990, p. 140). However, phantasmagoric place that "shades off into indefinite time-space from the familiarity of the home and the local neighbourhood is not at all a purely impersonal one", instead intimate relationships can be sustained at distance (Giddens 1990, pp. 140-143). This idea may help to explain the imaginary aspects of cybercommunities (Anderson 1983), the demise of offline communities and the emergence of culture at-a-distance. The *transformation of intimacy* explains individuals' trust towards non-face-to-face interactions brought about by disembedding mechanisms that have come to characterise modernity (Giddens 1990). These abstract disembedding mechanisms are constantly displacing the individual and familiar contexts around the individual, as well as, reembedding these in different contexts where intimacy and abstract systems interact, connecting familiarity and estrangement (Giddens 1990). With these in mind, participants' attachment to cybercommunities is precisely brought about by such mechanisms of displacement that have transformed traditional notions of intimacy and trust.

For Giddens (1990) modernity refers to modes of social organisation which evolved in Europe from the beginning of the seventeenth century and which have since become globalised. The modes of social organisation are unique compared to the modes of life of

earlier periods (Giddens 1990). In the late 20th century, it is suggested that modernity is replaced by post-modernity. Giddens does not agree with this suggestion. He wrote: "Rather than entering a period of post-modernity, we are moving into one in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalised and universalised than before" (Giddens 1990, p. 3). Nevertheless, some post-modern thoughts about community and self-identity may be able to facilitate an understanding of the environment of cybercommunities and self-identity in this environment.

Cybercommunity seems to be akin to the postmodern idea of community without propinquity (e.g., Calhoun 1998; Webber 1963). Instead of strong organic ties, postmodern communities are often communities of strangers (Turner 2001). The technologies of modernity have transformed the notion of community based on face-to-face relations by introducing too many distances into everyday life. These distances, arising from mobilities make it very difficult for face-to-face community to be a social reality: families and friends may be scattered around the world; home and work may be separated by different localities (Gergen 1991). As a direct response to these distances in modern life, individuals are relying increasingly on other forms of communication to sustain their realities, values and agendas (Gergen 2001). Actually, mobility is one of the key features of modern social life (Urry 2000). Constructed by technologies, cyberspace is able to produce communities without propinquity by bringing together strangers in a sociality, indeed, one often based on anonymity.

Actually, various characteristics of postmodern communities may be located in cybercommunities. Like postmodern communities, cybercommunities are reflexively organised: more likely to be chosen and more reflexive. Reflexivity, therefore, becomes the conscious questioning of social belonging (Lash 1994). Lash (1994) highlights the aesthetic sphere as the main location of reflexive community where a kind of *groundless community* exists. Marked by an aesthetic sensibility rather than symbolic codes, Maffesoli's *emotional community* is characterised by "fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal" and may be found in a proximity without space, in de-territorial groupings and in open networks (Maffesoli 1996, p. 76). Maffesoli (1996) also suggests that postmodern community is to be found in forms of association sustained by everyday life and informal friendship networks. Pahl (2001) argues that friendship is becoming increasingly important in social relations, even replacing family and kin relations. This argument may be used to explain the flourishing of cybercommunities, which are not based on organic relations.

For Maffesoli (1996) postmodern community has no foundation, no moral purpose, no project; it refers to nothing but the relations of sociability that constitute it; exists in

temporary groupings in the flux of life; and creates new sociality. In such communities, the sense of sociality and belonging may be seen as sustained by Giddens' *transformation of intimacy*.² In this sense, individual identities: as expressed in the relations between self and other in cybercommunities, may be seen as exemplifying the postmodernist thought about the notion of self.

The identity of the self has been one of the major themes in the postmodernist thought over the past twenty years. Modernist thought stresses the unity and coherence of the self, whereas postmodernist thought emphasises multiplicity and a plurality of fractured selves, above all, difference, for within every self is another self (Critchley 1998). Many postmodern thinkers reveal the self as a constructed category (e.g., Elliott 1999; Foucault 1988a, b & c). For Foucault it is the practices of the modern world and modern technology that produce a different kind of subject, which does not simply objectify and dominate the world through technology, but is constituted by this technology (Dreyfus 2002). Perhaps, cybercommunities may be interpreted as a product of such a subject. Although the self may be less trapped in cybercommunities, new kinds of struggles of self-identity appear. The notion of created self has put more pressure on the ideas of strangeness and familiarity than ever before, both in terms of the self and the relationship between self and other. The strangeness captures the essence of the feeling of insecurity, contingency and uncertainty, both in the modern world and in the identity of the self. The familiarity explains the sense of belonging and security that cybercommunities may provide for their participants. Perhaps, the emergence of cybercommunity fills the vacuum in contemporary society that has come with the opening up of culture to individualism. In Section 2.3.1 (*Pluralism and ontological insecurity*), the relationship between individualism and deviance in cybercommunities is explained.

In this respect, the human creation of cybercommunity may be interpreted as a response to modernity: pursuing a more extreme version of modernity in which individual self-identity can be more freely created and expressed. Combined with the idea that cybercommunity is created for individuals to retreat from the existing imperfect social world in pursuit of an ideal world, the human creation of cybercommunity may be interpreted as a double-edged response to modernity — retreating from the existing imperfect social world in pursuit of an ideal world, or pursuing a more extreme version of modernity to be carried beyond modernity itself.

²This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.2 (*The reflexivity of modernity and ontological insecurity*).

2.1.2 On self-identity

If the rise of cybercommunities is a direct response to modernity, then it is possible to relate some individuals' participation in cybercommunities to various divergent forces of modernity. As argued in the last section, some individuals' participation in cybercommunities may be interpreted as a double-edged response to modernity: retreating from the existing imperfect social world in the pursuit of a paradise, or pursuing an extreme version of modernity to experience fully, many characteristics of modern social order. However, regardless of the reasons behind some individuals' participation in cybercommunities, the act of engaging in an environment that is often argued to be different from the existing physical world, is profoundly modern and ultimately, intimately and inextricably linked to each individual and his/her identity.

Berger et al. suggest that individuals who live on the fringes of an existing community represent cases of *imperfect socialisation* and are more prepared to experience alternative forms and contexts of socialisation (Berger et al. 1974, p. 113). Sometimes, these individuals' "readiness to internalize new structures is no doubt sparked by the additional motive of resentment against the old" (Berger et al. 1974, p. 113). Following this logic, participants of cybercommunities may be individuals who either for personal (e.g., biological, medical) or social reasons (e.g., religious, ethnic, class groups) have not been fully integrated into the life of the communities in the physical world. This idea may promote the understanding of the detestation that some significant founding members of cybercommunities have against the existing social/political system and their desire to separate cyberspace from the control of real world institutions. For example, Barlow's *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace* (1996) celebrates the distinctive nature of cyberspace and the strong desire of not being governed by the existing institutions. A strong sense of resentment towards the existing governments may be sensed from his writing. Barlow wrote: "Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather" (Barlow 1996).

Furthermore, if modernity is associated with a miraculous quality that delivers individuals from the sufferings of hunger, disease, death and even religious notions of human condition (Berger et al. 1974), then to those who pursue modernity, cybercommunities may be seen as contexts that offer individuals equality, freedom and the opportunity to achieve a stronger sense of self. Barlow wrote: "We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth. We are creating a world where anyone; anywhere may express his or

her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity” (Barlow 1996). Conversely, if modernity is understood as “a spreading condition of homelessness” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 124), then cybercommunities may be perceived as the promise of a new home.

There may be a variety of reasons behind some individuals’ participation in cybercommunities, and a full comprehension of the true nature and extent of these may never be achieved. Nevertheless, it is feasible to devise a map of this social terrain, in which individuals with disparate ideological and pragmatic interests may locate themselves. Whatever this terrain may be, in the analysis, it will come down to a question about individuals. To make this map, a social model with several parameters which individuals may relate is required. The reasons behind these individuals’ interest in cybercommunities may depend on their individualistic interpretation of, and identification with, the conditions of modernity, self-identity and computer technologies. The interpretation and identification rest upon whether a person attaches greater value to his/her individual autonomy or to his/her very sense of ontological security, to freedom, experiment or to belonging. In mapping this social terrain, two extreme cases are examined: the pursuit of modernity and the retreat from modernity. It may not be possible to provide a definite and all-encompassing analysis of the individual agent. This thesis only offers a possible analysis of some individuals’ participation in cybercommunities.

The map of the social terrain surrounding individuals interested in cybercommunities is constructed using an analytical model with three ‘dimensions’ based on the following three sociological concepts, namely: *modernity*, *self-identity* and *computer technology*:

- The concept of modernity refers to an individual’s interpretation of, and identification with, the conditions of modernity.
- The concept of self-identity refers to an individual’s perception and evaluation of the notion of self.
- The concept of computer technology refers to an individual’s bond with computer technologies and awareness of the computer’s technical capabilities.

Each of these three properties is, of course, a sociological imperative. Combining these properties, it may be possible to make a model with which to analyse the social conditions of individual participants. The social condition of each individual is characterised by some degree, or measure, of these imperatives. Each property is in itself a spectrum with two polarities, indicating two extreme cases: the pursuit of modernity and the retreat from modernity.

Various characteristics of cybercommunities may be understood as exemplifying the conditions of modernity. Consequently, it may be possible to relate some individuals' participation in cybercommunities to the manner in which these particular individuals identify and interact with notions of modernity. Modernity on the one hand may be perceived as invasion of privacy by some individuals, but on the other hand, it may be viewed as providing various alternatives to exercise the opening between private and public sphere (Berger et al. 1974). Berger et al. argue that modern individuals live in the *pluralisation of life-worlds* (Berger et al. 1974, p. 62) and an individual's self-identity is constituted by a collection of his/her life-stories based on the various segmented public and private roles that he/she plays. By a life-world, Berger et al. refer to a social activity or context, such as the world of work, the world of family life and the world of local community. Indeed, in the era of modernity, self-identity is no longer a static concept (e.g., Bauman 2001; Bell 2001; Foster 2000; Hall 1995; Weeks 1995; Giddens 1991; Foucault 1981). The structural transformations of modernity have unleashed the subject of self-identity and enabled a reconstruction of the individual, through his/her collective life-stories and identities (Giddens 1991). For Giddens self-identity in the era of modernity "is not something that is just given... but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual" (Giddens 1991, p. 52).

If the environment of cybercommunities is one of the life-worlds, then a question arises: *with the multitude of choices available, why would cybercommunities appeal to some individuals?* Perhaps, prior to the existence of cybercommunities, with the universally acknowledged abstract systems permeating every aspect of everyday life, an individual would hardly have the feeling of being lifted out of his/her usual social conditions by a particular social activity; or simply, there have not been a social activity that transcends the stereotype of modern social life. Having segmented existence in various life-worlds, with almost all of them being pervaded by various abstract systems, lives may be experienced and perceived as both fragmented and alienating (Giddens 1991).

Living in these highly fragmented and alienated surroundings, some individuals may seek any available new arena of life to run away. To these individuals, cybercommunities are perceived as a milieu in which to escape. Conversely, to individuals who are more at home with the conditions of modernity, such as *plurality, componentiality, multi-relationality* and *progressivity* (Berger et al. 1974, pp. 102-103), cybercommunities may be perceived as contexts capable of providing them with an intensified experience of modernity. To these individuals, reality is not paramount but multiple, not static and given but constituted by clearly separable yet in structures of causality, time and space related components. Different realities are defined and authenticated in disparate ways

dependent on personal experiences and perceptions of these experiences. Perhaps, the progressivity of modernity — “a tendency to maximise the results or benefits of any action” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 103) is able to explain some individuals’ participation in cybercommunities as a means to pursue modernity. They may perceive cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity, which may have the potential of rewarding them with an immensely intensified sense of self.

Moreover, an individual’s identification with his/her presence in cybercommunities, is highly dependent on the individual’s bond with computer technologies and awareness of the computer’s technical capability. For instance, if an individual does not have a strong personal bond with computer technologies and perceive the computer system as a detached component of his/her daily routine, he/she may then interpret the real world and the context of cybercommunities as two detached *worlds*. In another case, if the computer system is deeply rooted in the individual’s daily routine, then he/she may identify with cybercommunities as an incorporated element of his/her life, thus making an unconscious connection between the real world and the context of cybercommunities. These disparate personal interpretations, as well as, the various degrees individuals identify with them, would have significant impacts on their identifications with their presences in cybercommunities. Furthermore, this identification may also be influenced by the extent of an individual’s awareness of computer technologies’ capability to record, store and trace.

Participants in cybercommunities need to create cyber representations of themselves, known as *avatars*, which can be a three-dimensional (3D) model, a two-dimensional (2D) icon, or a text construct, depending on the distinctive nature of a particular online environment. Certainly, technically, an avatar is a task performing technological construct, obeying commands sent via the keyboard. However, cognitively, an avatar could be identified as a visual representation of the self. Giddens (1991) argues that the self is embodied, and most individuals are absorbed and feel themselves to be a unified body and self. Moreover, the body is not only an observable representation of the self, but also inherently within the self. Giddens wrote: “[the body is] experienced as a particular mode of coping with external situations and events” (Giddens 1991, p. 56). However, at times, a state of disembodiment could be experienced, “in which the body appears as an object or instrument manipulated by the self from behind the scenes” (Giddens 1991, p. 59). Visual intersubjectivity is, therefore, a powerful driver and one that is satiated in a greater extent in the 3D graphics of places such as Second Life, as well as, being reinforced in the real life graphics of fantasy game play.

Following these, an avatar could be understood as *the cyber body*, performing similar

functions as the body. The cyber body may initially be viewed as in such a state of being manipulated by the self. If this is true, then the reasons behind having an avatar — personalising and intensifying the sensation derived from participating in cybercommunities, is diminished.

Perhaps, a sense of intensified pleasure, or an alleviated anxiety, can only be experienced with a precondition of embodiment between the self and the cyber body, since it is the self behind the computer screen that would experience the sensation. Assuming that the cyber body plays a similar role as the body, then having a visual image as the cyber body is important in sustaining feelings of embodiment, since “where it [the body] is not visible at all, ordinary feelings of embodiment — of being ‘with’ and ‘in’ the flow of day-to-day conduct — become dislocated or dissolved” (Giddens 1991, p. 60). Consequently, having a 3D image — a close visual imitation of the body, be it idealised or fantasised — may be the most appropriate in performing the cognitive roles that the body plays as related to the self. In short, having a 3D avatar is able to facilitate the achievement of a strong sense of embodiment, as well as, an intensified cyber experience. Giddens wrote: “How far normal appearances can be carried on in ways consistent with the individual’s biographical narrative is of vital importance for feelings of ontological security” (Giddens 1991, p. 58).

Perhaps, having 3D avatars in cybercommunities enables the observation of bodily activities, which is intrinsic to the continuous reflexive awareness of the self (Giddens 1991). This suggestion can be analysed both subjectively and intersubjectively. Subjective analysis is built around an account of complicated relationships between an individual and his/her avatar in a cybercommunity. This analysis focuses on the individual’s creation and identification of, and involvement with, his/her avatar in the cybercommunity. Intersubjective analysis is built around an analysis of complicated relationships between the individual and other individuals in the cybercommunity. The individual’s self-identity is heavily influenced by other individuals, since subjectivity is derived from intersubjectivity (Giddens 1991).

The continuous reflexive awareness of the self is central to the analysis of the relationship between cybercommunities and the real world. Modern society is experiencing a reflexive process at both the institutional and personal levels. Reflexivity may be understood as institutions’ and individuals’ regular and constant use of knowledge as the conditions for a society’s organisation and change (Giddens 1990). For Giddens society’s institutions are the means of the agent’s actions. Hence, the changed nature of institutions is only one side of the concept of modernity. Another side concerns how our everyday life radically changes character and affects the most intimate sides of the individual —

self-identity. Indeed, although “Discourse on modernity is overwhelmingly abstract and pitched at the level of generalities, if modernity is to be useful as a concept it must also facilitate the understanding of the intimacies of actual individual action (see, Giddens 1991) and be applicable to concrete situations not simply theoretical possibilities” (Haines 1996, p. 171). In this part of the thesis, Giddens’ theories of modernity are applied at the level of the individual, more precisely, an individuals’ self-identity, both subjectively and intersubjectively.

The Subjective Self

It is suggested that a 3D model may enable and facilitate better bodily observation and self-identification than a 2D icon, or a text construct. Moreover, the observation of *the cyber body’s* activities may facilitate the management of it, which is essential to the maintenance of the individual’s protective cocoon in daily interaction (Giddens 1991). While entering new unknown places, individuals would unavoidably want to take with them something in their daily interaction to maintain some forms of “normal appearance” (Giddens 1991, p. 126). The routines individuals observe constitute a sense of normality, which is not only within social activities, but also applies to the body (Giddens 1991). Giddens wrote: “The individual must be there in the flesh to be there at all, and the flesh that is the corporeal self has to be chronically guarded and succoured — in the immediacy of every day-to-day situation, as well as, in life-planning extending over time and space” (Giddens 1991, p. 126).

The need to maintain a certain degree of *normalcy* (Giddens 1991, p. 127) as a protective cocoon may be generally applied across the spectrum of reasons behind individuals’ participation in cybercommunities. At one end of the spectrum, if the cyber body is created to facilitate the retreat from modernity, then having a bodily image may be viewed as a comfort blanket, making the process of retreat less risky psychologically. Goffman wrote: “A body is a piece of consequential equipment, and its owner is always putting it on the line” (Goffman 1982, p. 166). At the other end of the spectrum, if the cyber body is created to facilitate the pursuit of modernity, then having a familiar bodily image may consciously bridge the gap between a participant’ real and virtual lives, therefore, enhancing the sensation provided by the cyber experience. Some participants in cybercommunities may use photos or graphic images to identify themselves, whereas others may use their real names, or names which are short forms, or close imitations of their real names, for their avatars. Moreover, having an observable 3D bodily image may be able to extend the sentiment of real world face-to-face interactions across time and space.

Nevertheless, there are various ways to achieve the sentiment of being in a face-to-face

interaction via text-constructs and 2D icons as well. For example, the development of individual writing styles, creation of native forms of language, use of various symbols, e.g., emoticons, such as the ‘:-)’ (smiley face) and intense descriptions of the physical settings of a particular cybercommunity may, to a more or less extent, induce a sentiment of face-to-face interaction (Williams 2006a). McLaughlin (2000) argues that text-based interactions in cybercommunities can be as *experientially real* (Williams 2006a) as interactions with the aid of graphic images, just as a novel may stimulate as much emotion from the reader as its big screen adaptation. McLaughlin (2000) further suggests that text-based interactions may be able to bring about greater emotional involvement, because texts may be more rigorously interpreted than graphically presented images of the same activity, where a participant is more involved with his/her observations of given forms and movements. However, currently, interactions in more advanced cybercommunities are often aided with both graphic images and texts. Moreover, it is rather apparent that graphically rich cyber environments are generally welcomed as a means of providing better social immersion (Williams 2006a; Herring 1999).

After establishing the idea that maintaining a certain degree of normality could either enhance ontological security, or heighten sensation while participating in cybercommunities. It is also crucial to address the fact that some individuals undergo significant, if not total, transformations from their real world self-identities when entering cybercommunities. Prior to entering cybercommunities, the embodied self is reflexively defined by various componential selves in different life-worlds. The notion of cyber body adds more complexity to this idea. There is a more exquisite subjacent relationship between the body being the physical body and the cyber body being the virtual body. The virtual body is dependent on the physical body for nutrition. Although theoretically, there is a possibility that data of the virtual body may live infinitely in cybercommunities, subjective activity of the virtual body ends at the point of death of the physical body.

To achieve a better comprehension of this problem, the notion of *reality inversion* (Giddens 1991, p. 27) may be taken into consideration. In some cases, the settings of cybercommunities are close imitations of real world communities. This “Familiarity generated by mediated experience might perhaps quite often produce feelings of ‘reality inversion’ ” (Giddens 1991, p. 27). By ‘reality inversion’ Giddens means the real object and event, when encountered, seem to have a less concrete existence than their media representation. In such cases, the body has been unconsciously lifted out of the self, leaving the cyber body embodying the self. Therefore, activities that are carried out by the cyber body may be perceived as being more real, makes more sense, entails more emotions than activities of the body. For instance, if a member of a cybercommunity cuts off all his/her real world contacts and detaches himself from his/her cyber exis-

tence when he/she needs nourishment, he/she may only be conscious of his/her cyber existence. In this case, the body only plays the role of providing food to sustain the cyber body and, more likely than not, the individual is not consciously aware of the fact that the body is still being embodied. This may be perceived as a state of *total* pursuit of, or retreat from, modernity, in which the visual observation of the body is almost completely replaced by the visual observation of the cyber body. In this case, the cyber body completely replaces the role of the body and is the sole informer of the reflexively defined self. Of course, this intense replacement may only be achieved if an individual has a very strong emotional bond with computer technologies.

Another aspect of this argument supporting the idea of total pursuit of, or total retreat from, modernity is the fact that many individuals not only represent themselves, but also behave via these representations very differently from their real world identities. An extreme example could be derived from Blundell et al.'s (2002) research on online sex abusers. Blundell et al. (2002) identify them as men between 25 to 50 years of age; relatively well-educated; having a higher level of intelligence; and more likely to be in a relationship and employment than not. In such a case, the cyber identity may be considered as a separated self — *a self*, instead of embodying the self. Moreover, an individual may have several avatars, each of them having its own identity differing from the rest of his/her cyber identities and his/her real world self-identity. Under such circumstances, each of these identities is a self on its own, which may or may not reflect the individual's true self.

The notion of a self is crucial in examining the core reasons behind cybercommunities' appeal to some individuals. At one end of the spectrum, the context of cybercommunities may be the only possibility for an individual to feel a sense of complete detachment from the self, thus achieving a state of total immersion in cybercommunities, in the sense that he/she is able to create another self to transcend not only his/her physical, social identity, but also his/her "being". The desire of creating a self which detaches from the self completely has been significantly visible in literature since the Enlightenment. In the present context, Blundell et al.'s research on online sex abusers presents a modern version of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde".

In the modern world, the *world of work* (Berger et al. 1974) dominates the social lives of the majority of the population: thus, the componential selves that are created for work places may have the foremost impact on the self. Moreover, individuals' private spheres are bounded by the world of work and sustained by various abstract systems, especially expert systems. Hence, Berger et al. (1974) suggest that in order to remove themselves from the dominance of the world of work, modern individuals must go on

vacation, either literally or figuratively. Berger et al. further elaborate that “Such a ‘vacation’ always involves a deliberate and often very difficult effort to shake off precisely that reality that is foremost in the individual’s work life” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 101). This suggestion may be able to facilitate a better understanding of the “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde complex”. If the reason behind an individual’s interest in cybercommunities is inclined towards the polarity of retreating from modernity, then he/she may want to retreat from his/her real world identity as well. Conversely, if the underlying reason is to pursue modernity in its extreme form, then the individual may want to experience fully, the opportunity of self creation. In both cases, existence in cybercommunities may be experienced and perceived as an alternative form of vacation. Asserting this idea, it may be suggested that just as some individuals behave differently when they are on holiday, they may also be inclined to behave differently when they are in cybercommunities.

Certainly, modernity has provided various lifestyle options that individuals may choose from and be reflexively defined by their chosen lifestyles. For example, having body-treatments has become a form of lifestyle. Giddens wrote: “Both life-planning and the adoption of lifestyle options become (in principle) integrated with bodily regimes. It would be quite short-sighted to see this phenomenon only in terms of changing ideals of bodily appearance (such as slimness or youthfulness), or as solely brought about by the commodifying influence of advertising. We become responsible for the design of our own bodies, and in a certain sense... are forced to do so the more post-traditional the social contexts in which we move” (Giddens 1991, p. 102). Cybercommunities are such post-traditional social contexts, many technologically advanced cybercommunities are equipped with 3D avatar creation technologies. However, more choices do not necessarily bring about freedom, instead they may generate more confusions. Giddens wrote: “Modernity confronts the individual with a complex diversity of choices, and because it is non-foundational, at the same time offers little help as to which options should be selected” (Giddens 1991, p. 80). This process brings about risk and anxiety (Giddens 1991). Perhaps, in the conditions of modernity, the self is constituted by various componential selves, all of which are reflexively defined. In the process of self construction, an individual is constantly faced with choices that he/she has to make. Every decision, including the most intimate matter of the heart that he/she makes, entails reflexive risk calculation, relating to both private and public spheres. Consequently, the process of decision-making becomes a systematic way to fit in. In general, to choose one option means the forgoing of the rest of the possible alternatives, including the possible gain, be it material or emotional, each of these possible alternatives may bring.

An individual is able to get away from the world of work — his/her objective self-identity — by participating in a cybercommunity. In the cybercommunity, the individual

has more freedom to choose whom he/she wants to be. Certainly, in a context where socially constructed status no longer have their weights; where individuals are at liberty to create themselves in ways they choose; and where the process of making these choices entails less external influences, these individuals may have a chance to truly express themselves. Hence, the created selves represented by various avatars in cybercommunities, regardless of whether they bear any physical, or cognitive resemblance to the selves in the real world, may be true, or at least truer reflections of the individuals behind the avatars.

The Intersubjective Self

The concept of self-identity needs be analysed and its importance highlighted from an intersubjective point of view, as well as, from a subjective point of view, since subjectivity is derived from intersubjectivity (Giddens 1991). Interpersonal relationship entails uncertainty, since in order to relate to another person, an individual has to “make the shift from the certainty of her or his own inner experiences to the unknowable other person” (Giddens 1991, p. 51). Bodily observations, therefore, provide a way to get to know other individuals — a possibility of achieving certainty. Hence, having an observable bodily image to represent one’s identity in a cybercommunity, not only retains normal appearances, but also provides a target of observation for the self, as well as, others. Giddens wrote: “a competent agent is one routinely seen to be so by other agents” (Giddens 1991, p. 56).

Perhaps, the observation of others, as well as, being observed by others, is the first step in social interaction, facilitating the building of relationship and community. Giddens considers that to be “able to join with others on an equal basis in the production and reproduction of social relations, is to be able to exert a continuous and successful, monitoring of face and body” (Giddens 1991, p. 56). Actually, Goffman (1982) and Garfinkel’s (1964) research has demonstrated that individuals are expected to sustain complete and unending control over the body in all settings of social interaction and, more importantly, this control has to be observed by others.

Like real world communities, cybercommunities are contexts for social interaction, providing community members with a specific environment that enables them to search for their personal subjectivity through intersubjective interactions — the building of relationships. Perhaps, cybercommunities have provided contexts for some individuals to experience what Giddens calls a *pure relationship* — a kind of relationship that is not fastened by external social or economic conditions, but based on commitment, intimacy and mutual trust (Giddens 1991, p. 88). A pure relationship exists only for what it can bring to the partners involved, it is openly and reflexively organised on a continuous

basis (Giddens 1991). In such a relationship, the individual involved not only recognises the other, but also affirms his/her own self-identity (Giddens 1991).

More likely than not, a real world community is defined by geography, profession, or kin relations. Consequently, individuals in these communities are aware of one another's social and personal statuses and may centre their social interactions on these socially constructed standards. By contrast, participation in cybercommunities is relatively simpler. Certainly, each cybercommunity has its core values and main themes. For instance, some cybercommunities are known for their gaming culture, whereas others are contexts created to build cyber societies, imitating infrastructures of real world societies, yet defined by their own systems of behaviour regulation. Individuals then choose from these options based on personal preference and interest, rather than social obligation or professional gain. In short, in most cases, connection to cybercommunities is purely optional (Williams 2006b). Of course, there are cases, in which individuals may have specific motives whilst entering cybercommunities. For example, an online groomer may choose to join a cybercommunity for the purpose of looking for victims. Nevertheless, in general, participation in cybercommunities is voluntary and not entailed with strong socially constructed motivations. Following this, cybercommunities may be perceived as voluntary associations that enable participants to retain the optional quality of private life and, at the same time, achieve some degree of certainty by existing within communities. Berger et al. (1974) suggest that human beings are not capable of tolerating the continuous uncertainty of existing without institutional supports.

However, due to the lack of physicality and face-to-face communication in cybercommunities, some individuals find it hard to conceptualise a notion of community that is mediated by computer networks (Williams 2006b). Nevertheless, it is, indeed, this void of physicality that highlights the hypothesis that cybercommunities' maintenance and coherence rest upon the building of pure relationships. Supporting this idea, Lash (2001) suggests that the nature of online encounters, being often fleeting and random, results in a perceived necessity to build permanent structures, so as to help embed meaning into interactions and identity online.

In practice, the desire to have pure relationship may provide a better understanding as to why some individuals have cyber relationships and even cyber marriages. It also provides some insights into the rationale behind cyber dating services, in the sense that individuals get to know one another based on initial interaction in cybercommunities, then they may or may not decide to meet up offline and build offline relationships. In this way, individuals are not pre-judged by one another based on their real world physical appearance or social status and, thus, relationships tend to be sustained upon mutual

interest and experience.

Furthermore, pure relationship exists for its own sake. The relationship itself is the only keeper and sustainer of it. Consequently, it is possible that the maintenance of pure relationship demands more emotional involvement from the partners involved. Imperatives that are present in all forms of relationship, such as commitment, intimacy, trust and self-examination, need to be affirmed more intensely, since without any geographical, social or religious restriction and boundary, these emotional phenomena need to be given more significance.

2.2 Understanding deviance in cybercommunities

In this research, the notion of deviance is used as a point of departure, instead of the notion of crime, because of three inter-related reasons:

- Most of the acts that this research seeks to investigate are of uncertain criminal status.
- The notion of deviance brings with it a sense of ambivalence, which is a necessary corollary of modernity.
- An understanding of deviance, automatically, requires a specific social context, a community, since actions are often given different meanings in different social contexts.

Indeed, established social norms have been shaped, re-shaped and continuously debated through a long and complicated process of social interaction. The concept of crime as behaviour which is prohibited by the criminal code (Michael and Adler 1933) thus becomes shallow, especially when compared to the subtle distinctions and understandings that are required to research on deviant acts in cybercommunities. In Williams' research on deviance and control in the cybercommunity *Activeworlds*, he uses the term 'cyber deviance or harms' to include activities in the cybercommunity that "contravene social norms and values within any given on or offline community" (Williams 2003, p. 260). Deviant acts in cybercommunities are products of the process of participants' perceptions, applications of these perceptions to activities and labelling them as deviant.

Actually, there is a shift in the definition of crime from legal violation, to norm infraction, to social labelling. The shift is brought about by a broader change in the discourse of crime caused by many current social changes. Contemporary social life is characterised by a multitude of choices; a constant questioning of established beliefs and certainties; a heightened level of self-reflexivity; a lack of embedded biography and life trajectory; and

the constant confrontation with a plurality of social worlds and beliefs (Giddens 1991, pp. 70-88). In such conditions, the old certainties of the obvious nature of crime, as bequeathed by the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and the scientific revolution of the nineteenth century — classicism and positivism — have been cast into doubt. Today, the deviant is no longer an ‘other’. “Crime has moved from the rare, the abnormal, the offence of the marginal and the stranger, to a commonplace part of the texture of everyday life. . . ” (Young 1999, p. 30). If cybercommunities are extreme products of modernity, then placing deviance in cybercommunities in a discussion of some contemporary debates in criminology, may promote a way of understanding deviance in cybercommunities. Conversely, an investigation of deviance in cybercommunities should provide some insights into the nature of deviance in modern society and individuals’ understanding of it.

2.2.1 Pluralism and ontological insecurity

What exactly is a crime is contested and subject to debate. In his theory of crime, at the very beginning, Braithwaite observes: “Crime is not a unidimensional construct” (Braithwaite 1989, p. 1). Michal and Adler first defined crime as “behaviour which is prohibited by the criminal code” in 1933 (Michal & Adler 1933, p. 5). In 1947, Tappan’s black letter law approach highlights two important criteria in determining a form of behaviour as crime, firstly, “there is no crime without the criminal law” and, secondly, “there is no crime without the conviction of the criminal decided upon by the criminal justice system” (Tappan 1947, p. 100). The black letter law approach is straightforward and practical. However, the notion does not deal with the nature and causation of this form of behaviour. More importantly, if there is no crime without the criminal law, then how should deviant acts, such as those in cybercommunities that are not stamped as statutory offences in black and white be perceived? These acts will still be there even without being labelled.

Sellin (1938) introduces the idea of crime as norm infraction by suggesting an extension to the concept of crime beyond legal violations, covering violations of moral and social code. He further proposes that such universal norms are unlikely to be found either inside or outside of the law since human behaviours, morality and social organisations are highly diversified (Sellin 1938). Sellin’s (1938) concept of ‘universal norms’ has instigated Sutherland’s concepts of ‘social injury’ and ‘social harm’ which mainly focuses on unethical practices among businessmen and corporate managers in the USA. Sutherland not only stresses the role of the state, but also states two necessary elements in determining a particular type of behaviour as crime: “legal descriptions of an act as socially harmful and legal provision of a penalty for the act” (Sutherland 1949, p. 31).

Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1970) extend Sutherland's list of potential practices that could be classified as 'social injury' to include the system violation of human rights and promote a definition of crime based on "a conception of the denial of basic fundamental human rights" (Muncie & McLaughlin 1996, p. 13). They consider the abrogation of these basic fundamental human rights as "certainly limits the individual's chance to fulfill himself in many spheres of life. It can be stated that individuals who deny these rights to others are criminal" (Schwendinger & Schwendinger 1970, p. 148). Schwendingers' (1970) concept seems to assume the existence of a moral consensus that covers all spheres of social life and any behaviour that contravenes the consensus is then considered as criminal. This moral consensus may not exist. Different spheres of social life, be they public or private, may have their own values to determine whether a form of behaviour is unacceptable.

In fact, one of the primary characteristics of modernity is the pluralism of value "stemming from three major sources: (1) the *diversification* of lifestyles which are a result of growing individualism; (2) the closer *integration* of society, including the narrowing of travelling time through physical space and the implosion of glimpses of other societies and cultures provided by a growing and ever proliferating mass media. Business, tourism, television, all bring us together; (3) the *immigration* of people from other societies" (Young 1999, p. 15; emphasis in original). Pluralism has brought about a change in the perception of, and reaction to, deviance. Deviance is no longer perceived as "*inherent* in an item of behaviour, it is a quality that *bestowed* upon it by human evaluation" (Young 1999, p. 39; emphasis in original). This means, the same act may be perceived differently in different social contexts, communities, as well as, by different people in the same community, because they come from different cultural backgrounds, therefore, have different bases for evaluation. In such a situation, "The distinct deviant other is no longer present, cultures not only appear plural but they blur, overlap and cross over" (Young 1999, p. 15).

This pluralism of value is exemplified in cybercommunities. As discussed previously,³ the rise of cybercommunities is intimately related to the pursuit of individualism and diverse life styles. Many more advanced cybercommunities are constituted by various different sub-communities. Each of these sub-communities may have its own rules and values: thus a perfectly acceptable act in a sub-community may be considered as deviant in another, resulting in a situation where everyone is a potential deviant. Following this, deviance occurs in cybercommunities not because of "material inequalities or differences in culture but because of the lack of an unquestioned and moralistic *absolutist* culture (see Taylor et al., 1973)" (Young 1999, p. 79).

³See: Section 2.1 (*Cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity*).

Actually, the multiple realities of different subcultures, societies and alternative life styles, constantly undermine any notion that one's world is obvious and certain, resulting in a deep-rooted ontological insecurity. This ontological insecurity has brought about a need to reassert one's values as moral absolutes. Young wrote: "The desire to demonize others is based on the ontological uncertainties of those who would site themselves at centre stage" (Young 1999, p. 165). This may serve to partly explain the rise in crime rate globally after the Second World War (with the exception of Japan). In fact, the rise in crime does not necessarily mean any changes in the 'real' crime rate, but sometimes, reflects wider social anxieties unrelated to crime (Young 1999).

Following this, the increasing public concern over deviance in cybercommunities may merely be a reflection of social anxieties unrelated to deviance. Actually, if ontological insecurity is a by-product of modernity, then disembedding oneself from the more familiar tracks in the physical world (e.g., family and work) to participate in cybercommunities may automatically exacerbate this insecurity. The reflexivity of skepticism and anxiety may reach a new height in cybercommunities, resulting in an increasing desire to demonise others, therefore, an increasing rate of deviance. For example, the freedom to create one's own avatar resonating with Giddens' notion of self-actualisation allows individualism to reach a new height and individualism "undermines the relationships and values necessary for a stable social order, hence gives rise to crime and disorder" (Young 1999, p. 50).

Demonising an 'other' suggests that the deviance is a product of some deviant essence inherent in the individual or group, therefore, not a characteristics of 'us'. Every folk devil sharpens the image of the normal person, and allows the boundaries of normality to be drawn more definitely and distinctly, bringing about a sense of security — an important aspect in a world of insecurity and uncertainty. Moreover, demonisation allows the problems of society to be blamed on 'others' usually perceived as being on the 'edge' of society (Young 1999). As discussed previously,⁴ participants in cybercommunities may be individuals who for personal or social reasons have not been fully integrated into the life in the physical world. This makes these participants perfect candidates to be demonised. This resonates with the fact that current research on deviance in cybercommunities seems to suggest that cybercommunities are fertile grounds for deviant activities to manifest.

Wall (2007) uses Presdee's (2000) 'carnival of crime' thesis to explain the frequently crossed boundaries of order in cyberspace. For Presdee the Internet is fast becoming the safe site of the second life of people, which is "expressed through the world of excess, ob-

⁴See: Section 2.1 (*Cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity*).

scenity and degradation” (Presdee 2000, p. 8). Williams attributes the “increased levels of deviant activity online” to the “relative freedom individuals may feel being untied from material commitments of the offline world” (Williams 2003, p. 185). Moreover, the ubiquitous opportunities to deviate granted by increasingly accessible information technologies, as explained in Pease’s (2001) notion of ‘empowered small agent’, promote the idea that everyone could be a potential deviant in cybercommunities.

With all these in mind, deviance in cybercommunities becomes highly problematised. Perhaps, instead of searching for a clear-cut distinction between deviant and non-deviant, it is more appropriate to view behaviour as a continuum between the tolerated and the not tolerated. In the continuum, “the cut-off point varies over time and between different individuals and groups” (Young 1999, p. 39) in the same cybercommunity, as well as, between different cybercommunities. This view of deviance in cybercommunities resonates with the labelling tradition. To the labelling theorists, crime rates are no longer obvious summarisations of items of behaviour ‘out there’, but are processes in which both human actions and definition are subject to change. Indeed, “Crime does not exist. Only acts exist, acts often given different meanings within various social frameworks. Acts, and the meaning given them, are our data” (Christie 2004, p. 3).

2.2.2 Deviant acts in cybercommunities

Given Christie’s (2004) view, an understanding of the forms of deviant acts that may occur in most cybercommunities is required, prior to investigating the specific contexts that grant to these acts the meaning of being deviant. Deviant activities in cybercommunities may be classified into two categories: deviance against the person and deviance against community cohesion.

Deviance against community cohesion is exemplified by cyber vandalism, which may result in serious damage to the cybercommunity. Cyber vandalism includes deviant activities that are targeted against property and infrastructure of a cybercommunity (Williams 2006a). The impact of cyber vandalism on cybercommunities is significant, especially on those that are represented by 3D graphic images and equipped with building tools for participants to build their homes and communities. Like offline communities, ideas, memories and histories are permeated within properties and infrastructures within cybercommunities, thus, cyber vandalism is a concern for those who wish to protect these ideas, memories and histories (Williams 2004). Certainly, infrastructures in both real world and cybercommunities have the function of bringing individuals together. Hence, the destruction of community properties and infrastructures may have a serious destructive impact on personal relationships and community unity in cybercommunities.

Deviance against the person includes cyber trespass, cyber theft, cyber stalking, cyber obscenity, cyber pornography and cyber violence. In the larger context of cyberspace, cyber trespass is known as “the invasion of private space on the Internet by a hacker” (Williams 2006a, p. 21). The initial act of hacking into a computer system is usually followed by activities related to theft, such as credit card theft, information piracy and identity theft, or activities related to disruption, such as Denial of Service (DoS) attack, the planting of viruses, worms and Trojan horses, the deliberate manipulation of data, cyber spying and cyber terrorism⁵ (Wall 2001). In cybercommunities, cyber trespass is often followed by the theft of personal information, e.g., credit card numbers.

Cyber theft is generally classified into two types, firstly, the appropriation of intellectual property, such as the reproducing and distributing music and video over computer networks and, secondly, the appropriation of virtual money, such as the theft of credit card numbers via discarded credit card receipts and unsecured online credit card transactions (Wall 2001). In the context of cybercommunities, cyber theft is extended into the appropriation of another avatar’s virtual properties, even the “look and feel” of virtual properties. For example, in Second Life, an avatar has accused another avatar for the appropriation of his/her intellectual property, the design for a virtual bed.⁶

Spamming is known as “the distribution of unsolicited bulk emails that contain invitations to participate in ways to earn money; obtain free products and services; win prizes; spy upon others. . . ” (Wall 2005, p. 2). Spams are usually associated with unsolicited and annoying commercial advertisements received via email systems. Spams occupy spaces in email inboxes, lowers the efficiency of email systems and slows down Internet access rates. More seriously, spamming is often associated with information harvesting and viruses infection. For example, Trojans delivered by spams may be used to install ‘back doors’ in computer systems, which are later used to facilitate hacking.⁷ Spamming has caused a growing number of Internet users to become disillusioned with email.⁸ In cybercommunities, sending different forms of emails (e.g., Instant Messages (IMs)), is the main method of communication. Following this, spamming may be a very prevalent activity in cybercommunities.

Cyberstalking is a significant form of cyber harassment, which involves the use of the In-

⁵Of these activities, two might need some explanation. “Cyber spies break access codes and passwords to enter classified areas on computer networks. . . to appropriate classified knowledge. . . Cyber terrorism can take many forms including denial of service (DoS) attacks where entire servers are brought to a standstill, halting business and sometimes even whole economies” (Williams 2006a, p. 22).

⁶See: <http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/science.technology/second+life+avatar+sues+another/598767>; accessed 11/02/2009.

⁷See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/2988209.stm>; accessed 12/02/2009.

⁸See: http://www.pewinternet.org/report_display.asp?r=116; accessed 12/02/2009.

ternet to pursue, harass or contact other individuals in an unsolicited fashion (Petherick 2000). Given the nature of this act and the span of the Internet, most online stalkings do not materialise in any physical context, yet they are distressing. The scope of cyberstalking is far wider than offline line stalking, because in cyberspace “there are a wide variety of means by which individuals may seek out and harass other individuals even though they may not share the same geographic borders, and it may present a range of physical, emotional, and psychological consequences to the victim” (Petherick 2000, p. 1). On the other hand, the only sensory perception is the reading of text message, but text messages sent across cyberspace are usually stored before being read and the delay, therefore, limits and decreases the negative impact of cyberstalking.

Cyber obscenity and pornography is another area of concern. Earlier, it is estimated that around 1% of all materials of the Internet is pornographic (Jauch 1997). A little later, there is an estimated 14 million pornographic sites existing, carrying about a million pornographic images of children (Wellard 2001). It must be noted that although cultural, moral and legal variations make it difficult to define ‘pornographic content’, globally, mainstream pornography is generally legal in many countries (Akdeniz 1997). On the contrary, child pornography is generally illegal in many countries. Nevertheless, there is much debate over the definition of online child pornography, because the legal definition of child pornography differs significantly, globally. The use of the Internet and associated technologies by the sex industry extends beyond providing and selling pornographic materials. With the aid of the Internet and associated technologies, sex offenders no longer need to look for victims in parks and school yards. Instead, they can groom youngsters in cybercommunities, taking advantages of the natural curiosity of children, looking for vulnerable ones.

Cyber violence includes online activities that have the potential to cause harm to others via text and other digital methods (Wall 2001). These activities range from minor exchanges, such as flaming (Joinson 2003) to more serious altercations, such as racial and homophobic hate related online violence (Mann et al. 2003). Online hate speech is a form of cyber violence, which is expressed in the directing of persecutory, hateful and degrading messages of racial inferiority against individuals of a historically oppressed group (Nielsen 2002). Online hate speech is largely of two types, firstly, hate speech that takes the form of websites, associated chat rooms and bulletin boards which are usually established by organised political groups and, secondly, hate speech that is propagated via the Internet in the form of text message that is usually not of an organised nature (Yar 2006). The contents of the first type of online hate speech are “typically far right, ultra-nationalist, white supremacist and neo-Nazi in orientation” (Yar 2006, pp. 101-102). Websites of these orientations usually contain “offensive and hateful represen-

tations of Blacks, Jews, Muslims, Arabs, other people of non-European origin, women, homosexuals, and persons with physical and mental disabilities” (Yar 2006, p. 102). The victim groups of this type of online hate speech are easily and clearly identified and acts within this group tend to be more organised.

A more serious kind of online violence is known as cyber rape (Mackinnon 1997). The first case of rape in cyberspace is reported in 1993 (Dibbell 1993). Dibbell’s article *A rape in cyberspace or how an evil clown, a haitian trickster spirit, two wizards, and a cast of dozens turned a database into a society* narrates and analyses the intense online experience of several cybercommunity members within the text-based cybercommunity of LambdaMOO, when a hacker cyber-named Mr. Bungle entered the cybercommunity and took control over their actions. In short, Mr. Bungle had depicted in texts violent rapes of several individuals. The series of Mr. Bungle’s violent acts included forcing an individual into unwanted liaisons with other individuals; making an individual eat his/her pubic hair; and causing an individual to violate herself with a piece of kitchen cutlery (Dibbell 1993). Apparently, no one had sustained actual physical harm yet community members were reported of being seriously traumatised by Mr. Bungle’s violent acts. One of the victims, cyber-named legba wrote the following words with post-traumatic tears streaming down her face, “. . . I also think Mr. Bungle was being a vicious, vile fuckhead, and I . . . want his sorry ass scattered from #17 to the Cinder Pile. I’m not calling for policies, trials, or better jails. I’m not sure what I’m calling for. Virtual castration, if I could manage it. . . ” (Dibbell 1993, p. 7).

The ‘Wonderland Scandal’ in the cybercommunity of Second Life has stirred up heated public debates over the use of child-like avatars to engage in sexual activities. Wonderland is a place in Second Life, in which, child-like avatars are found to be offering virtual sex to other avatars. Potentially, there may not be any child involvement, because it takes a certain level of technological skill to create those highly graphic child avatars. The main concern is virtual crime may have real victims, if virtual criminals bring that fantasy with them into the real world and ultimately seek to act that out.⁹

2.2.3 Reflexivity and risk

The ‘Wonderland Scandal’ embodies the notion that although most deviant activities in cybercommunities escape legal regulation — personal and social harm caused by these activities cannot be evaluated by normal disciplines due to their “esoteric nature”, they are “still arguably harmful” (Williams 2006a, p. 18). Deviance in cybercommunities not only negatively affects the individuals involved, but also social cohesion in the real

⁹See: <http://www.massively.com/tag/wonderland-scandal>; accessed 13/01/2008.

world. Indeed, reflexivity means an individual's self-identity has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual across different social worlds, therefore, an action in one spatial-temporal boundary would have an effect outside of the restriction (Giddens 1990). In short, reflexivity explains not only the personal but the social harm of deviant activities in cybercommunities in the boarder context of the physical world, but also the social anxieties instigated by deviance in cybercommunities in contemporary society.

The contemporary world is a world of uncertainty in that "each level of risk will be questioned by experts and public alike" (Young 1999, p. 70). For Giddens "To live in the 'world' produced by high modernity has the feeling of riding a juggernaut. It is not that more or less continuous and profound processes of change occur; rather, change does not consistently conform either to human expectation or to human control" (Giddens 1991, p. 28). The rise of cybercommunities confirms such a form of change. Deviant activities in cybercommunities present, precisely, such a form of danger beyond human expectation or control.

Giddens wrote: "In circumstances of modernity, traditional notions of fate may exist, but for the most part these are inconsistent with an outlook in which risk becomes a fundamental element. To accept risk as risk... is to acknowledge that no aspects of our activities follow a predestined course, and all are open to contingent happenings" (Giddens 1991, p. 28). Indeed, "it is quite accurate to characterise modernity, as Ulrich Beck does, as a 'risk society' " (Giddens 1991, p. 28).

The research on deviance in cybercommunities, therefore, needs to be situated in the broader context of the 'risk society'. The possible harm caused by deviant activities in cybercommunities, especially those that escape legal regulation due to their "esoteric nature" (Williams 2006a, p. 18), should be evaluated with a "calculative attitude" (Giddens 1991, p. 28) to the open possibilities of harm within and without of these cybercommunities. Moreover, the calculative attitude provides an understanding of the increasing public concern over deviant activities in cybercommunities. These points are discussed in detail in Chapter Five (*Understanding Deviance in Second Life*).

In the discourse of criminology, the calculative attitude known as actuarialism is "a major motif of social control in late modern society" (Young 1999, p. 66). In a world where the 'other' is ubiquitous and not restricted to certain group identities, the causes of deviance are increasingly unsure and one person's order is disorder for another, actuarialism focuses on the calculation of risk. Young wrote:

" The actuarial stance is calculative of risk, it is wary and probabilistic, it is

not concerned with causes but with probabilities, not with justice but with harm minimization, it does not seek a world free of crime but one where the best practice of damage limitation have been put in place; not a utopia but a series of gated havens in a hostile world” (Young 1999, p. 66).

Indeed, the contemporary world is a “Brave New World” “where the emphasis is on the social construction of reality, of making one’s own life style rather than acting out a predetermined essence. . . , where difference could be respected. . . , where authority was treated with suspicion, [and] where no longer would one culture proclaim its unchallenged dominance. . . ” (Young 1999, p. 99). The environment of cybercommunities exemplifies this “Brave New World”. Deviance in cybercommunities, therefore, is neither a result of personal pathology nor environmental determinism, but of broad cultural and social pressures arising from the heart of modernity.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the main theoretical framework for the thesis. The nature of deviance in cybercommunities is investigated by examining the relationship between cybercommunities and the modern world. To understand this relationship, it is necessary to obtain an understanding of the sociology of the modern world. Giddens’ (1991 & 1990) theories of modernity are used as a set of analytical tools. Cybercommunities are considered as extreme products of modernity. Reflexivity, as a characteristic of modern life and organisational behaviour, is an inherent process within the formation of cybercommunities and the nature of deviance within these reflexively organised structures. Deviance in cybercommunities is intimately related to broad cultural and social pressures emanating from contemporary society. Consequently, research on deviance in cybercommunities should provide some insights into the nature of deviance in contemporary society.

However, reflexively appropriated knowledge is open to uncertainty. Giddens wrote: “The chronic entry of knowledge into the circumstances of action it analyses or describes creates a set of uncertainties to add to the circular and fallible character of post-traditional claims to knowledge” (Giddens 1991, p. 28). Hence, the discussion of deviance in cybercommunities in the context of modern society, is inherently ambivalent and subject to debate.

In the following chapter, attention is turned to the methodology and methods employed in this research. To achieve a continuing dialog between theory and empirical work requires a careful choice of methodology and methods. This choice is profoundly influenced

by the theoretical notion of reflexivity.

Chapter 3

Grounded Theory in a Cybercommunity: A Reflexive Methodology

Methodologically, cybercommunities present various concerns. To a sociologist, a cybercommunity is rather different from communities in the real world, for a number of reasons, such as the vastness of research populations; anonymous research subjects; multiple field sites; and advanced computer technologies within these field sites (cf. Williams 2003). Consequently, the wealth of sociological research methodologies and methods that are available for analysing communities and groups in the real world must be re-evaluated before they are used to explore a community in cyberspace. The process of re-evaluation evolves fundamental ideas and principles. Moreover, advanced computer technologies involved may suggest innovative methods to the sociologist.

This chapter describes the methodology and methods employed in the research. The aim of this chapter is to detail a re-engineered grounded theory approach used in this research and provide a reflexive account of the research process. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explains the relationship between theory and empirical work in this research; the use of the re-engineered grounded theory; and the theory-guided search for the research site. The second section accounts for the research methods used in this research, namely: participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a Second Life residential forum, alongside some ethical considerations concerning carrying out empirical research in a cybercommunity.

The methodology of ethnography is heavily used in social science research in cybercommunities (e.g., Boellstorff 2008; Williams 2003; Markham 1998). However, the choices of research methodology and methods need to be based on the nature of the research

(e.g., Bryman 2001). In this case, a grounded theory approach is considered to be more well-suited to the intimate relationship between theory and empirical work that is a fundamental characteristic of this research. With this in mind, instead of following the ‘conventional’ approach of ethnography, this research uses a grounded theory approach that is re-engineered for a cybercommunity. Although Fernback (1999) suggests that grounded theory is the most effective way to address issues of social phenomena as they occur in cyberspace, no established social science research could be found using this methodology to carry out research in cyberspace. Grounded theory is considered as the most suitable approach to be employed in this research for the following three reasons:

- Grounded theory warrants a degree of flexibility that is essential for an exploratory research.
- Grounded theory embodies the intimate relationship between theory and empirical work, which is fundamental in this research.
- Grounded theory is directly concerned with discovering processes, which is central to the conceptualisation of a cybercommunity and, more importantly, to the constitution of deviance in the cybercommunity.

In short, grounded theory offers a flexible design that embodies the reflexive nature of this thesis and the uncertainty that is inherent to deviance in cybercommunities. However, it needs to be emphasised that the methodology of grounded theory is generally used to develop theory that is grounded in data. In an orthodox grounded theory research, research hypotheses in the discovery process can only be drawn from connections between the emerging concepts coded and questions deduced from the codes concerning what is happening in the field (Glaser 1978). It means that the researcher is to read and re-read a textual database and discover or label variables called categories, concepts and properties, as well as, the relationships between them. The researcher’s ability to perceive these variables and relationships is termed *theoretical sensitivity*. Theoretical sensitivity is affected by a number of things, including the researcher’s reading of the literature and use of research techniques, such as as different methods of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. In this research, the methodology of grounded theory is adopted largely because of its reflexive research process, not its purpose to generate a theory nor its methods of coding.

While considering the applicability of grounded theory in this research, two problems are immediately apparent:

- The actual disposition of grounded theory as a methodology is controversial as a result of a split between the two originating theorists.

- Although grounded theory allows an intimate relationship between theory and empirical work ‘the emergence of theory directly from data collected’ does not encapsulate the inter-dependent relationship between theory and empirical work in this research.

The first problem is straightforward, whereas the second one needs to be explained in more detail. As discussed in Chapter Two¹, Giddens’ (1991 & 1990) theories of modernity are to be used to analyse deviance in cybercommunities. These theories not only provide a theoretical position for the research, but also serve as an abstract framework guiding the entire research process, namely: the selection of Second Life as the field of inquiry; the formulation of questions in both questionnaires and discussions in a Second Life forum; and the analysis of data. Indeed, the intimate relationship between theory and empirical work is a fundamental characteristic of this thesis.

To resolve these two problems, a re-engineered grounded theory that combines grounded theorising and adaptive theorising, is adopted. Adaptive theorising allows an existing theoretical framework to be adapted reflexively in relation to empirical data during the research process — this theoretical framework reconfigures itself in the light of data collected (Layder 1998).

Unlike most studies of cybercommunities in social science (e.g., Boellstorff 2008; Williams 2003; Markham 1998), the field of inquiry — Second Life is selected based on a sociological framework for mapping cybercommunities. The framework has four ‘dimensions’, namely: *modernity*, *technology*, *community* and *the individual*. In principle, this framework is applicable to cybercommunities in general. However, during the process of selecting and eliminating cybercommunities, there are also various practical issues that play a very important role, influencing the decision.

Although the context of a cybercommunity is significantly different from all real life settings, it has been established as a context for social research. Moreover, these differences are not ground-breaking enough to rebuff the application of traditional social research methods. Nevertheless, research methods must be modified with regard to characteristics that are unique to cybercommunities. The processes of re-engineering the social research methods of participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a Second Life forum are described. A general principle of the empirical work is to take advantage of the advanced technologies and social networks available in Second Life, and to maintain minimal disturbance to the lives of individuals in Second Life.

¹See: Chapter Two (*Cybercommunity and deviance in the age of modernity*).

3.1 Research methodology: a continuing dialogue between theory and empirical work

Effective research methodology embodies a systematic approach to problem solving, incorporating the generation of new ideas and the accurate description of situations, typically through data collection and the subsequent presentation of this data in clear and digestible form (Robson 2002). The general principle of choosing a research strategy is that the strategy and the methods or techniques employed, must be appropriate for the questions that the researcher wants to answer (Robson 2002). Cybercommunities, are in their infancy, so is research in this area. Given the discipline of criminology has been researching notions of crime and deviance for decades, why are these notions such a challenge when it comes to deviance in cybercommunities? The general picture of deviance in cybercommunities is one of muddle and confusion. The primary purpose of this research is to explore what is happening in this little understood research area. With this in mind, this research is to explore an area of human interaction about which little is known (Kumar 2002). The methodology of grounded theory is “Particularly useful in new, applied areas when there is a lack of theory and concepts to describe and explain what is going on” (Robson 2002, p. 89). The grounded theory approach warrants a degree of flexibility that is essential for an exploratory study.

In this research, there appears to be a lack of well-established functional theory in the research area. Although the purpose of this research is not to generate a theory, a ‘theory generation’ methodology could be moulded to fit this research. Grounded theory is a way of generating new theory grounded in the research field, which consists of simultaneous data collection and analysis, informing and forcing each other right through the research process (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Therefore, data collection, analysis and theory stand in a reciprocal relationship with one another (Strauss & Corbin 1998). In a grounded theory, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant is allowed to emerge: one does not begin with a theory, then prove it (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Generating a theory involves a process of research, which is both inductive and deductive. Inductively, theory emerges from observations and generated data. Deductively, the emerged theory can then be tested in the research field to develop forecasts or predictions. In this fashion, most concepts and hypotheses within the generated theory are allowed to emerge directly from the data and in due course, are tested against the real world.

Fernback (1999) suggests that grounded theory is the most effective way to address social phenomena and issues as they occur in cyberspace. Perhaps, a grounded theory approach is, especially suitable for exploring deviance in a cybercommunity, because it

is concerned with discovering process: an important dimension in the conceptualisation of a cybercommunity and, more importantly, the nature of deviance in the cybercommunity. Essentially, there are three processes occurring and being reflexively constructed simultaneously, namely: the researched cybercommunity, deviance in the cybercommunity and grounded theorising. The terrain of a community is mapped through a process of reconciling interpersonal dynamics, collective dynamics, ideologies and all these take on new significance in cyberspace (Fernback 1999). Moreover, a cybercommunity may be translated into a process of interplays between its technological capabilities and social characteristics. Deviance does not exist as a given entity: "Acts are not, they become. People are not, they become" (Christie 2004, p. 6). Most deviant acts in cybercommunities do not have any legal status. To make matter more complicated, there isn't a uniform set of activities, commonly defined as deviant in most cybercommunities. It seems that the meaning of deviance in a cybercommunity may be determined by a process of social and technological evolution as perceived by individual participants. Grounded theory is a process of theory generation (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Using a grounded theory approach to investigate deviance in a cybercommunity would place emphasis on the relationship between the cybercommunity and the participants in it, connecting various perspectives about deviance from the participants with patterns of acts and the cybercommunity.

Grounded theory is concerned with discovering process, which is an important dimension in the conceptualisation of a community and phenomena in it (Fernback 1999). Applying grounded theory, the researcher may be able to observe participants' practices, beliefs and actions in a cybercommunity, such as participants in the cybercommunity argue among themselves as to whether their group constitute as community (e.g., Watson's 1997 study of the Phish.Net fan community); whether an act should be punished and how should it be punished within the community (e.g., Williams' 2003 study of the Activeworlds); and how do individuals define themselves in the cybercommunity (e.g., Maczewski's 2002 study of youth experience online).

Deviance in cybercommunities is not a given entity — some of those acts may have been given meaning by legally defined offences in cyberspace and the real world, and then shaped by the specific contexts of cybercommunities. Others are products of the specific technological and social characteristics of individual cybercommunities. In this research, there are two areas of investigation: the nature of deviance and the manifestations of deviant activities in the research field of Second Life, which translate into two research questions:

1. How is deviance constituted in Second Life? What, if anything, is the relationship between deviance in real life and Second Life?

2. How do deviant activities manifest themselves in Second Life?

These two questions are not investigated independent of each other, since the manifestation of deviant acts is intimately related to their constitution. Perhaps, an identification of a list of generally recognised deviant acts in Second Life may reveal a set of general values at work in cybercommunities, relating to the nature of deviance. Most terminologies of deviant acts in cybercommunities sound really familiar, such as cyber violence, cyber harassment and cyber vandalism. Perhaps, there are some intimate relationships between deviant activities in cybercommunities and their offline counterparts, be they conceptual (Question 1 above) or, in the concrete textual, visual and audio manifestations of deviant acts (Question 2).

Actually, "Theory is never completely isolated from problems of empirical research, any more than empirical research is free from theoretical assumptions" (Bottoms 2008, p. 75). This research is a continuing dialogue between theory and empirical work. Giddens' theories of modernity are used as a set of analytical tools to guide the research before and during the research process, as well as, to make sense of the empirical data. Following this, one of the primary challenges for this research is to put theory and empirical work together in a coherent way. Methodologically, this means to re-engineer grounded theory to fit the interpretive relationship between theory and empirical work in this research.

To reflect this interpretative relationship between theory and empirical work, the approach to the relationship between theory and empirical work needs to incorporate at least the following five features:

i. a firm acceptance that there are no theory neutral facts, and that the process of empirical research is therefore inextricably involved with theoretical issues from the outset of the inquiry. (Because of the data at which they were originally formulated, some of the classic statements of both hypothetico-deductive theory and grounded theory fail to grasp the full implications of this crucial point.)

ii. a willingness to test and to refine hypotheses rigorously where appropriate, but not in such a way that one becomes blind to the implications of fresh data that do not readily 'mesh' with the pre-existing line of inquiry.

iii. a willingness to employ to the full the benefits of the wide search for relevant data, as well as, the 'comparative analysis' method, advocated by grounded theory, while nevertheless accepting the two key points listed above.

iv. an unwillingness to foreclose inquiry too quickly, recognizing with Glaser and Strauss that theory is indeed always a process... 'an ever-developing entity'.

v. a genuine willingness to utilize appropriately both quantitative and qualitative data-sources” (Bottoms 2008, p. 98).

Examining grounded theory in terms of the five features above, two problems become immediately apparent:

- As a result of a split between the two originating theorists, there are contested ideas regarding the use of pre-existing conceptual frameworks, the literature review and data sources.
- The original form of grounded theory does not reflect the relationship between theory and empirical work in this research.

Next, these two problems are addressed by a re-engineered grounded theory befitting this particular research.

3.1.1 Pre-existing conceptual frameworks, literature and data sources

One of the controversial issues in grounded theory concerns the use of pre-existing conceptual frameworks and literature. Glaser’s approach (1978) remains faithful to the original portrayal of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967). His purist disposition focuses on the essential characteristic of theoretical sensitivity and highlights logic; analytic procedures; comparative methods; conceptual development; and assumptions of an external yet noticeable area of research (Charmaz 2005). Glaser (1978) strongly asserts that data must be collected without forcing it into pre-existing frameworks, which can only be achieved by an unbiased researcher with an open attitude to the research area where the researcher is professionally naive. In contrast, Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate the verification of meaning, which involves the emergence of categories and properties by means of comparison, and the justification of grounded theory being influenced by the researcher’s existing ideas. Robson (2002) considers it impossible to start a research without some forms of pre-existing theoretical idea and assumption. For Charmaz (2000) Glaser’s purist insistence on professional naivety is based on the false assumption that data can be gathered free from bias or biography.

In this case, the researcher may have more pre-existing knowledge and ideas about the context of, and behaviours in, cybercommunities than other researchers in the discipline of criminology. The researcher’s interest towards deviant behaviours in cybercommunities was initially sparked by several unrelated events personally and professionally. Prior to undertaking a doctorate in criminology, the researcher had completed a bachelor degree in Computer Science. During her degree course, the researcher had been immersed

in the culture of communicating via different types of forums (Bulletin Board Systems) and participating in Multi-User Domains (MUDs). The researcher's interest in deviance in cybercommunities started while doing her undergraduate dissertation on computer crime in the final year of the degree course.

For Strauss and Corbin (1998) reviewing the literature early in the study would stimulate theoretical sensitivity; provide a secondary source of data; stimulate questions; direct theoretical sampling; and offer supplementary validity. Glaser (1992) strongly disagrees with this stance and advocates that professional literature related to the area under study must not be examined until the researcher is in the field, and codes and categories have begun to emerge. In this research, a general literature review was carried out before selecting the research field, for a number of reasons, not least, because the identification of a credible research area before entering the field was required to satisfy the Departmental Ethics Committee. During the process of reviewing the current literature, Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach involving the use of literature to identify phenomenon, and the application of existing insights and experience to the subject matter where appropriate was unconsciously adopted.

Some loose conceptual frameworks were inevitably formed after the reviewing of the literature. Glaser and Strauss' (1967) description of the original grounded theory states that the root of certain ideas and models can come from sources other than the data, as long as, the generation of theory from such insights is brought into relation to the data. However, Glaser's (1978) grounded theory states that a pre-existing abstract framework may compel the researcher to find the information that is pre-supposed by the hypotheses, but not logically deduced. Glaser further insists that research hypotheses in the discovery approach can only be drawn from what is happening in the field (Glaser & Holton 2004; Glaser 1978). Glaser wrote: "the intertwining of grounded theory with preconceived conjecture, preconception, forced concepts and organisation, logical connections and before-the-fact professional interest defaults grounded theory to a remodeling of grounded theory methodology to the status of a mixed methods QDA (Qualitative Data Analysis) methodology" (Glaser & Holton 2004). In contrast to Glaser's insistence on professional naivety and methodological purity, Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory is more flexible. It encourages the researcher to apply existing insights and experience to the research area where appropriate, as well as, mix grounded theory with various alternative methodologies. Following all these, the actual methodology used in this research is leaning towards Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach.

Regarding research methods, the original description of grounded theory fails to specify the acceptable sources for data in grounded theory studies. In their research on hospital

patients, Glaser and Strauss (1968) adopted first person observations to collect data. Following this tradition, most published grounded theory studies adopt observation and face-to-face interview to gather data (Warburton 2005). However, Glaser and Strauss (1967) believe that both qualitative and quantitative data are useful for generating theory; the decision should be made based on the circumstances of research; the interests and the training of the researcher; and the kinds of material he/she needs for his/her theory. Supporting Glaser and Strauss (1967), Charmaz (2000) indicates that grounded theory methods specify analytic strategies, not data collection methods and identifies a number of rich data sources suitable for use in grounded theory studies, such as observations, conversations, formal interviews, autobiographies, public records, organisational reports, respondents' diaries and journals. Strauss and Corbin (1998) give emphasis to the importance of considering types of data sources at the beginning of the research. They advise researchers to think of sources for data based on the "interplay between qualitative and quantitative methods" (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 31). Their strategy also allows back-and-forth interplay between combinations of both types of procedure, with qualitative data influencing quantitative analyses and vice versa (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Befitting the nature of this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to collect data.

However, although Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory offers a more flexible alternative to the original form of grounded theory, it still insists that unless the researcher is building on or continuing with his/her previous studies, he/she would not be able to start empirical research with a set of pre-established concepts or a well structured design. Strauss and Corbin wrote: "The research design, like the concepts, must be allowed to emerge during the research process" (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 33). Following this, it seems that the relationship between theory and empirical work in Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory differs from the relationship between theory and empirical work in this research. In this research, the research design and main concepts are initiated from Giddens' theories of modernity. Moreover, during the entire research process, the research design and concepts generated are constantly shaped by Giddens' theories of modernity. With this in mind, in this research, Giddens' theories of modernity play a role as significant as empirical research. During the research process, concepts do not directly emerge from the data collected, instead they emerge reflexively in relation to existing frameworks constructed with the aid of Giddens' theories of modernity.

3.1.2 The research process: adaptive theorising

Although Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory approach is able to incorporate, to a certain extent, all of the five features of the relationship between theory and em-

pirical work (Bottoms 2008) listed above, there is still a lack of a formal theoretical statement describing the interpretative relationship between theory and empirical work in this research. It needs to be re-emphasised that this research is a continuing dialogue between theory and empirical work, and one of the primary challenges for this research is to put theory and empirical work together in a coherent way. Giddens' (1991 & 1990) theories of modernity play important roles before, during and after the empirical research process. Before the empirical work, these theories form an abstract theoretical framework which places the research in a particular theoretical position — to analyse the relevance for criminology of the general social theory of Giddens. This approach is important as although 'general social theory' (GST), "interests and excites theoretical criminologists" the most, it is often "remote and baffling to empirical researchers, with the result that they have not mined the resources of this kind of theory as fully as might have been hoped" (Bottoms 2008, p. 101). Bottoms wrote: "some general social theories (such as theorization about late modernity) are particularly concerned with... 'whole societies and the processes involved in their development', and it must obviously be the case that any GST with useful insights into the nature of a given 'whole society' might contain ideas that can be fruitfully employed (or adapted) to analyse particular structures or processes within the society" (Bottoms 2008, p. 102). This research is precisely such a project. During each stage of the empirical research, Giddens' theories serve as a set of guidelines, which directs and shapes the research process. After each stage of the empirical research, these theories are used as a set of analytical tools, which facilitates the analysis of data collected, as well as, the formulation of the next set of inquiries.

The final conceptual framework facilitating a better understanding of deviance in cyber-communities does not emerge directly from data collected, instead it has a reflexive relationship with Giddens' theories of modernity. In Layder's *Sociological Practice: Linking Theory and Social Research* (1998), this approach is termed *adaptive theory*. Adaptive theory consists simultaneously two fundamental properties (Layder 1998):

- The presence of an existing theoretical framework, which has a relatively durable form, since it adapts reflexively rather than automatically in relation to empirical data.
- This theoretical framework should never be regarded as immutable, since it is capable of accommodating new information and interpretations by reconfiguring itself.

At the start of a research, an initial theoretical scaffolding should be explicitly constructed. This theoretical scaffolding can then be modified, relatively slightly or funda-

mentally, either by inductive process or the formal testing of hypotheses. The modification of the theoretical scaffolding is the essence of adaptive theorising.

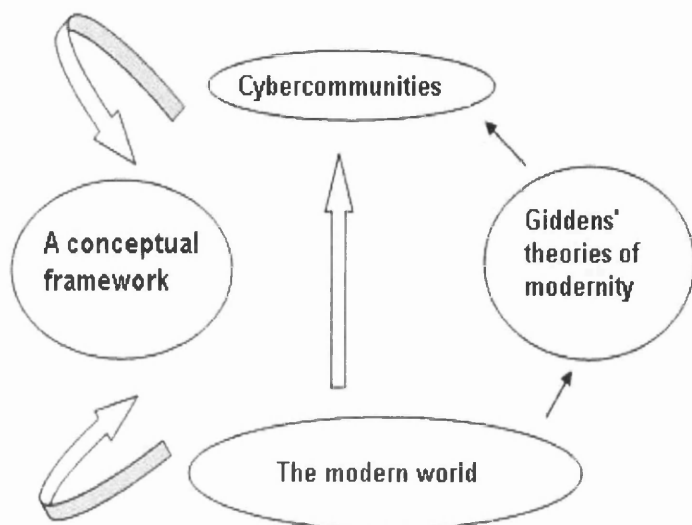


Figure 3.1: The pre-existing theoretical framework

Consider some of the stages involved in adaptive theorising in this research. Prior to the beginning of the research, the impression of the research area could be summarised in the following sentences. The dark side of cybercommunities has attracted much attention from the media. Some of these more technologically and sociologically advanced cybercommunities seem to be de-

veloping into projections of the real world. With this in mind, the rise of cybercommunities may have something to do with the social dynamics of the modern world. However, although there are many similarities between some cybercommunities and the modern world, there are also many fundamental differences, e.g., cybercommunities exist in cyberspace. Consequently, the potential relationship between some cybercommunities and the modern world is not isomorphic — every characteristic in a cybercommunity can not be matched onto a characteristic in the real world. This relationship is more likely to be homomorphic — although there are many differences between a cybercommunity and the real world, the basic structures of a cybercommunity and the real world can be matched. A theoretical framework is, therefore, needed to match the basic structure of the selected cybercommunity and the real world. Giddens' theories of modernity provide such an abstract theoretical framework. It is understood that to better understand deviance in cybercommunities, a new conceptual framework is needed (see: figure 3.1). The process of developing the conceptual framework may direct the research to areas of inquiry that would otherwise lay undiscovered. The discovery of these areas may lead to insights that would otherwise remain in the dark.

At the beginning of the research, it is speculated that individuals' perception of deviance is heavily influenced by legally defined offences in the real world and notions of deviance in cyberspace (see: figure 3.2).

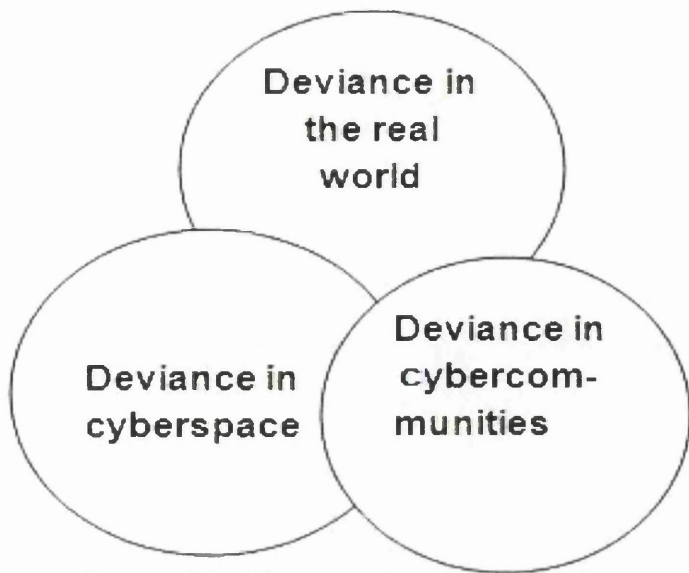


Figure 3.2: The investigation of deviance

Perhaps, an identification of acts that are deemed commonly as deviant in most cybercommunities would reveal a set of core values at work in the environment of cybercommunities. Perhaps, there is a dynamism between deviance in cybercommunities, crime in the real world and notions of deviance in cyberspace, since many terms for deviance in cybercommunities sound fairly familiar (e.g., cyber violence, cy-

ber harassment and cyber rape).

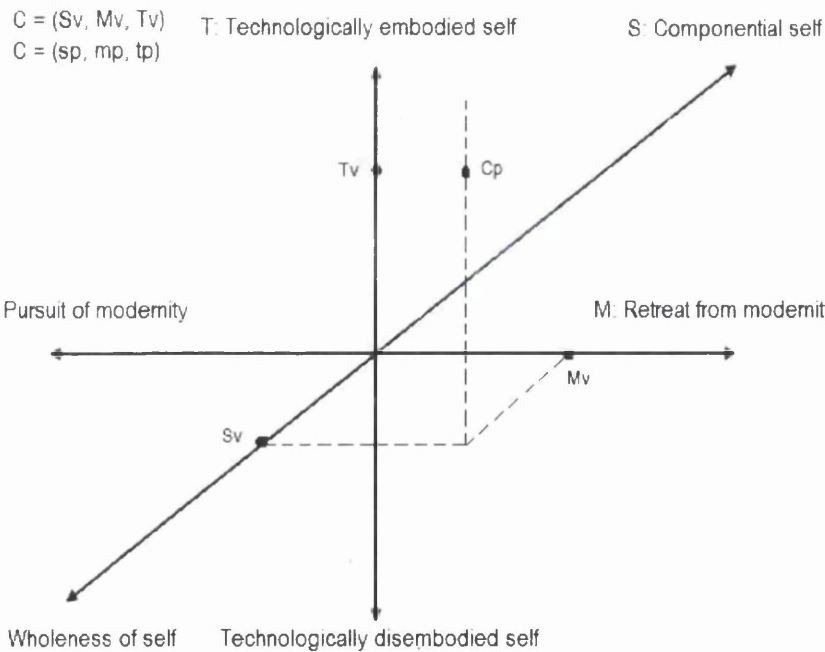


Figure 3.3: An individual's condition

There may be various possible reasons behind individuals' interest in cybercommunities and these reasons inevitably relate to modernity. To this end, these reasons may form a sociological terrain with two extreme polarities: the pursuit of modernity and the retreat from modernity. An individual's perception of deviance in a particular cybercommunity may be determined by his/her condition

in the cybercommunity, especially the motivations behind his/her participation in this cybercommunity. A conceptual model constituted by three social imperatives, namely: *modernity*, *self-identity* and *computer technology* is formulated to map the conditions of individuals (see: figure 3.3).

Following these theoretical ideas, the cybercommunity Second Life is selected as the field of inquiry, because it is one of the most, if not the most, advanced cybercommunities,

both technologically and sociologically.² In short, Second Life is selected, because it is considered as an exemplar of modernity.

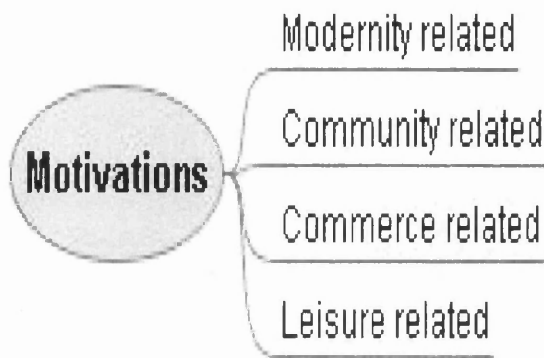


Figure 3.4: Four categories of motivations

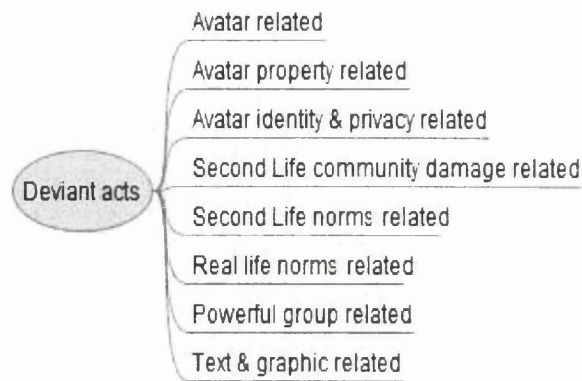


Figure 3.5: Eight categories of deviant acts

With the guidance of all these pre-existing theoretical positions, the first stage of empirical work, participant observation, allows for the identification of 91 different types of acts that may be construed as deviant by some residents in Second Life, as well as, 39 different types of motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life. After the completion of the participant observation, for analytical purpose, the 91 different acts are classified into 8 categories and the 39 different motivations are classified into 4 categories (see: figure 3.4 & figure 3.5).

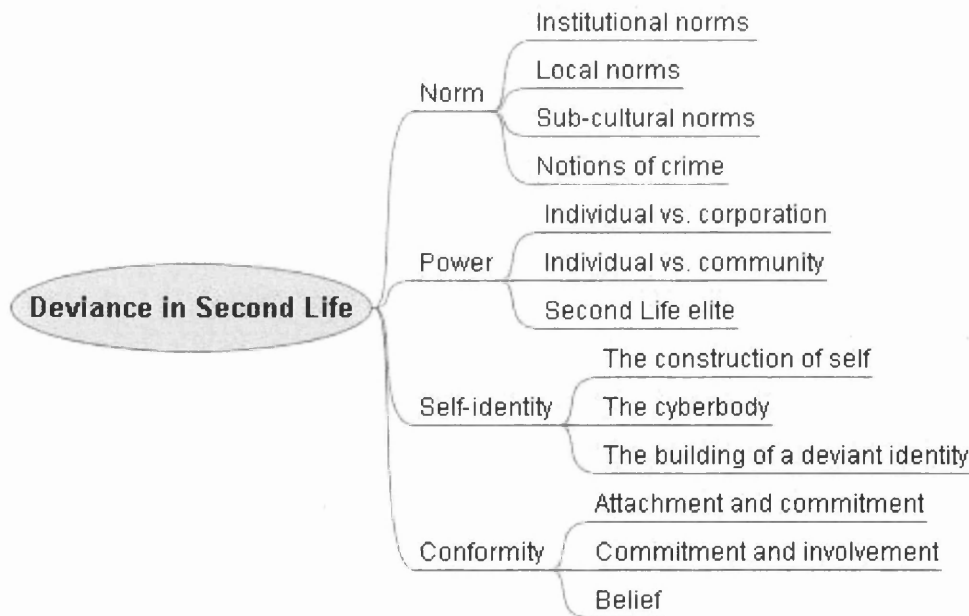


Figure 3.6: The four main themes

²See: Section 3.1.3 (*Theory-guided search for the site of inquiry*).

Through participant observation four main themes emerge. These are: *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity*³ (see: figure 3.6). The participant observation concludes that an individual's self-identity as represented by his/her avatar can be divided into two types:

- Engagement, which includes the individual's length of participation and frequency of participation.
- Appearance, which includes the avatar's type, gender, character, age and origin.

Each of these attributes may have its influence on the participant's perception, experience and performance of deviance in Second Life.

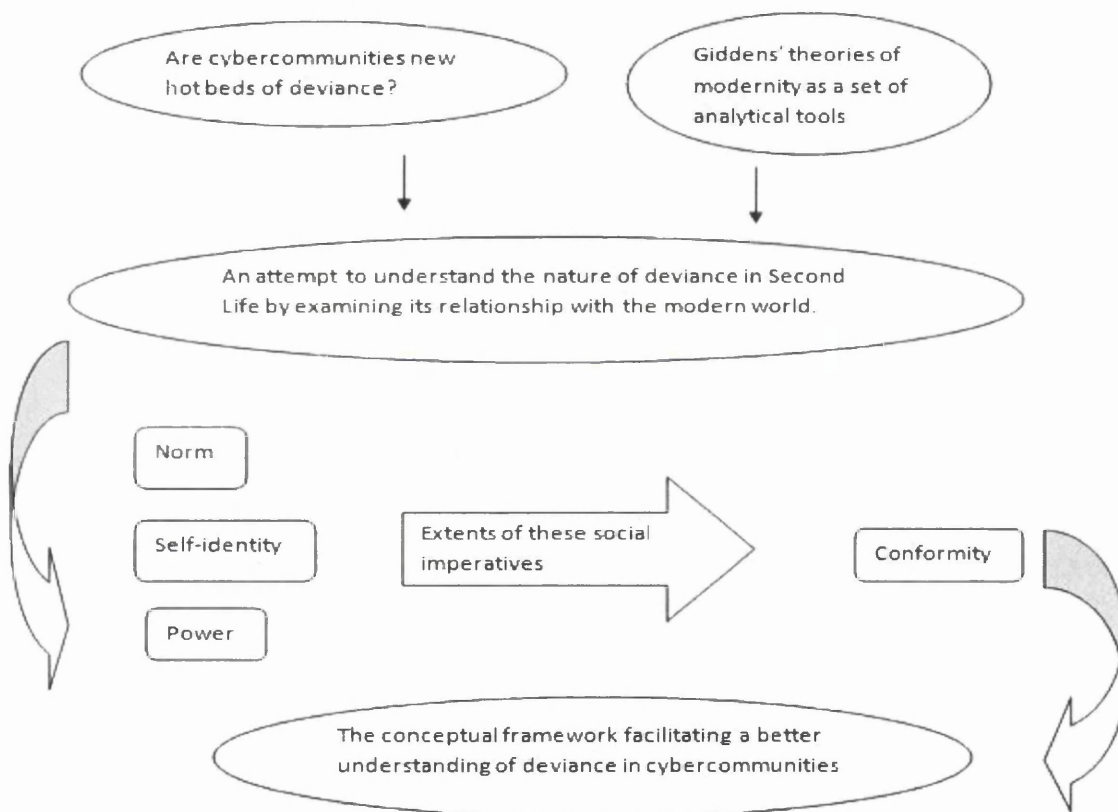


Figure 3.7: The theoretical framework after the questionnaire research

These four main themes alongside Giddens' concepts of modernity have contributed to the formulation of the three questionnaires used in the subsequent stage of empirical work. The data retrieved from these three questionnaires leads to a new theoretical framework (see: figure 3.7). Using the new theoretical framework together with previous discoveries, lead to the formulation of a theoretical framework facilitating the last stage of research on deviance in Second Life (see: figure 3.8).

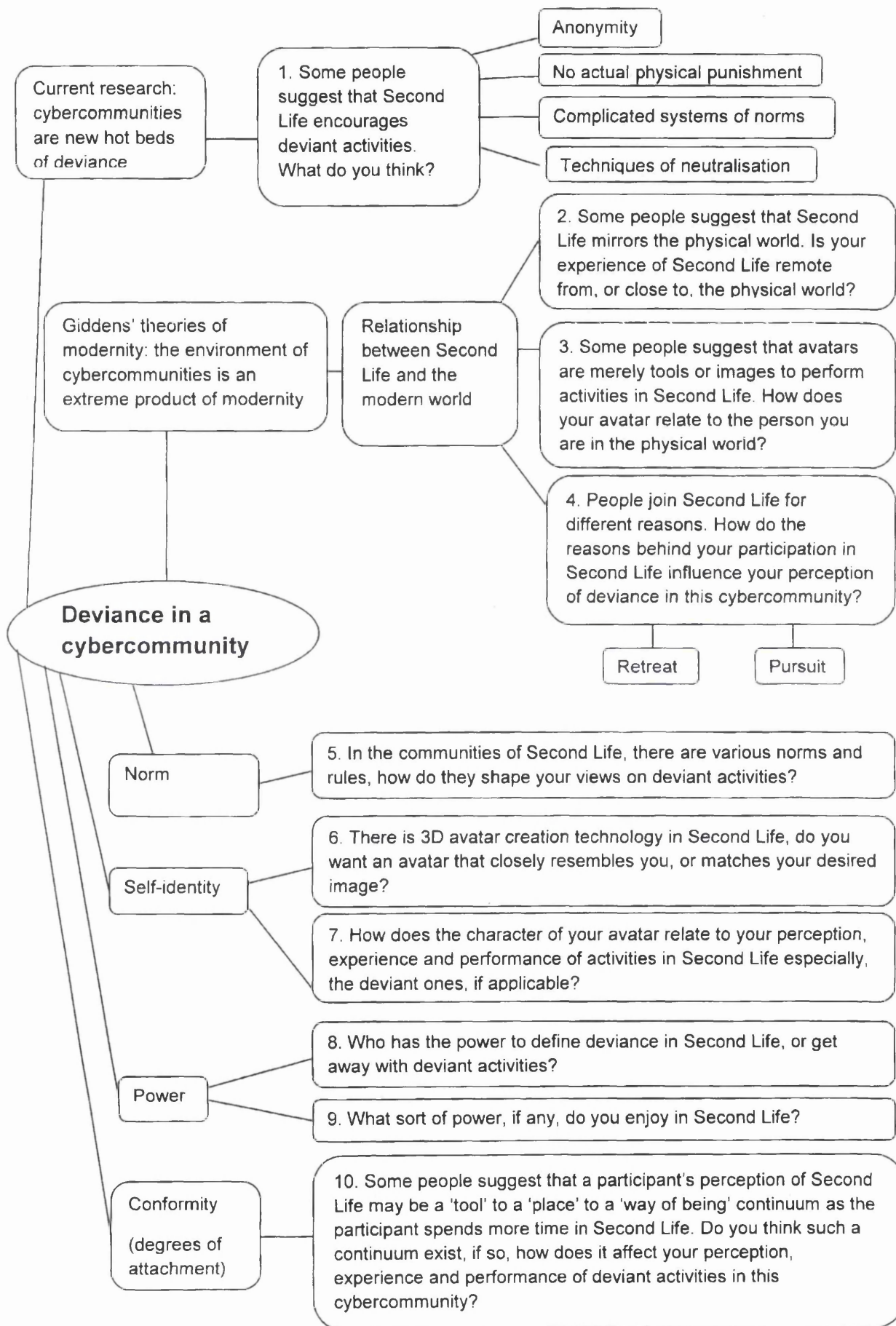


Figure 3.8: The theoretical framework facilitating the last stage of empirical work

Through this adaptive research process, an understanding of deviance in Second Life is neither obtained exclusively in a deductive manner (theory) nor absolutely within an inductive frame (data) of reference. In this research, induction and deduction are considered as “frameworks of ideas — discourse and the practices they embody — which are potentially open to each other’s influence” (Layder 1998, p. 136). The theoretical framework and empirical research have equal weight in this research. During the research process, they influence each other and, at the same time, have dual influence on theory construction (Layder 1998). In this way, aspects of Giddens’ theories of modernity are incorporated into this research. This incorporation is very difficult, if it is at all possible, in the original form of grounded theory, as procedures recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967) preclude an empirical researcher from including elements of general social theory into his/her analysis.

The challenge for such an adaptive research process is to arrive at a good synthesis that merges theory and data together in an ongoing collective search for the truth (cf. Bottoms 2008). Although the adaptive theory framework allows for a continuing dialogue between theory and data, the actual application of it, is largely dependent on the individual researcher’s understandings and skills as the research unfolds. In this research, a successful application of the adaptive research process is largely dependent on the extent of the adoption of Giddens’ theories of modernity. There are two main strategies of general social theory adoption in any social science research: ‘wholesale adoption’ and ‘selective adoption’ (Layder 1998). In this case, a wholesale adoption is a decision to employ the whole package of concepts and underlying assumptions of Giddens’ theories of modernity to provide an explanation of deviance in cybercommunities, whereas a selective adoption is to adopt some concepts from Giddens’ theories of modernity, as well as, other general social theories as a way of seeking to enrich the theoretical explanation of deviance in cybercommunities (cf. Layder 1998).

In this research, the wholesale adoption may disturb the equal relationship between Giddens’ theories of modernity and the emerging empirical research results, in two different ways, firstly, while presenting the research findings, the researcher would have to defend every concept in Giddens’ theories of modernity and, secondly, a wholesale adoption of Giddens’ theories of modernity may blind the researcher to concepts emerging in data collected (cf. Bottoms 2008). The selective adoption also has its disadvantages, firstly, there is the possibility of taking concepts out of their original theoretical context of Giddens’ theories of modernity, therefore, inevitably distorting their meaning (cf. Layder 1998) and, secondly, selective adoption allows the selection of concepts from different

³See: Chapter Four, Section 4.2 (*Second Life: emerging main themes for the analysis of deviance*).

general social theories, which may disturb the search for synthesis and lead to eclecticism (cf. Bottoms 2008). Bearing all these in mind, in this research, Giddens' theories of modernity are used "*selectively, but with appropriate sensitivity to the overall contexts within which the concept(s) were first generated*" (Bottoms 2008, p. 104; emphasis in original). In this way, a synthetic and coherent continuing dialogue between theory and data elucidating deviance in cybercommunities would be achieved.

3.1.3 Theory-guided search for the site of inquiry

The choice of Second Life as the site of inquiry is based on a framework with four 'dimensions', namely: *modernity, technology, community* and *the individual*. Two aspects of the framework guide this choice, firstly, technological and social characteristics of different cybercommunities and, secondly, individual participants' recognition and perception of these characteristics. In principle, this framework is applicable to cybercommunities in general. However, during the process of selecting and eliminating cybercommunities, there are also various practical issues that play a very important role, in making of the final decision.

Modern social and cultural formations are shaped by technologies and, at the same time, technologies are socially constructed. As argued in Chapter Two,⁴ the formation of cybercommunities may be perceived as an extreme example of a co-construction: the social construction of technology and the technological shaping of society. It seems that social characteristics and technological capabilities of a cybercommunity have significant influence on the rise of deviant acts in the cybercommunity (cf. Williams 2003 & 2006a). From this, it may be speculated that an individual's perception of deviance in a cybercommunity may depend on his/her awareness of, and involvement with, the social and technological aspects of the cybercommunity. Initially, the basic infrastructure of a cybercommunity is created by computer software. Then, the infrastructure supports and stimulates advanced human communications and interactions, adding more human and social dimensions to these technological creations. Indeed, the technological capabilities of a cybercommunity would shape and determine methods of interaction among community members and influence the formation of social relationships. More importantly, the technological capabilities of a cybercommunity would determine social themes and purposes within the community. Moreover, the process of shaping and determining would impact on the emergence and pattern of deviance within the cybercommunity. Gradually, as human interactions and social relationships develop in a cybercommunity, participants may experience the desire to add new technological features enabling the formation of more advanced human relationships, therefore, to a certain extent,

⁴See: Section 2.1.1 (*On cybercommunity*).

strengthening the sense of community.

Each cybercommunity has a life of its own and, at the same time, individual participants do perceive things and choose to behave, differently. Having this in mind, while selecting cybercommunities, one has to consider both the community context and individual participants' perception of technological and social characteristics of the community.

Having these in mind, various cybercommunities are examined from the two perspectives of technological infrastructure, and social themes and purposes. According to their technological capabilities, cybercommunities may be based on text, 2D or 3D image. The extent of individual social activity is simultaneously enabled and restricted by the technological capabilities of the computer software in each cybercommunity. Cybercommunities may be created for various purposes, such as commercial gaming, socialising and online community building, education, political expression, military training, etc.⁵ Each of these may generate diverse community cultures, norms and inter-personal relationships. All of these purposes would, in term, result in different concepts of deviance in different cybercommunities. Individual participants' behaviour in a cybercommunity may be influenced by the social themes or purposes of the cybercommunity and its initial set of regulations. However, the extent of these influences is determined by different individuals' recognition and perception of both technological capabilities and social purposes of various cybercommunities in which they participate. Moreover, there are also some practical issues that should be taken into consideration. Existing rules of a cybercommunity, such as methods of registration, may also place restriction on individual behaviour. The various levels of technical difficulty of each cybercommunity may also influence participants' behaviour. Cybercommunities having participants from various regions of the world may provide richer and more convincing data.

Thus, the final decision is made by a careful examination of three different aspects:

- The technological infrastructure and social characteristics of a cybercommunity.
- The individual participant's recognition and perception of the technological infrastructure and social characteristics of the cybercommunity.
- Some practical issues.

⁵See: <http://www.virtualworldsreview.com/info/whatis.shtml>; accessed 04/03/2007.

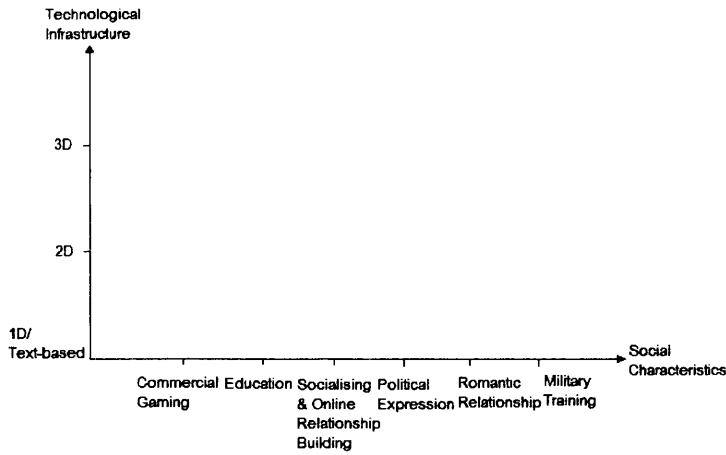


Figure 3.9: The general model

This process of elimination and selection begins with looking at all cybercommunities. The first step of elimination is illustrated in figure 3.9 (only the basic criteria for selection is displayed since there are too many cybercommunities to be listed in the diagram).

As argued in Chapter One,⁶ during the process of modernisation, technology has transformed itself

from being a tool, to a system, to a cultural force. Indeed, the invention and privatisation of the World Wide Web (WWW) is the most extraordinary and dramatic example of technology as a cultural force. With the WWW, computer technology becomes almost essential in human lives. Berger et al. (1974) suggest that in the conditions of modernity, individuals typically live in the *plurality of life-worlds*. The context of cybercommunities may be perceived by the participants as one of the life-worlds. Moreover, the formation and evolution of cybercommunities may be perceived as an example of the integration of technology (technological infrastructure) and society (social characteristics), exemplifying some characteristics of modernity. With this in mind, perhaps, it is more appropriate to carry out empirical research on deviance in cybercommunities created by the most advanced computer technologies.

Thus, 3D cybercommunities may be better contexts to carry out empirical research, since these cybercommunities may be perceived as representing the most advanced technological innovation. It is rather apparent that graphically rich cyber environments are generally welcomed as a means of providing better social immersion (Herring 1999). Moreover, as argued in Chapter Two,⁷ avatars that are created to represent individual participants may be perceived as cyber bodies. An avatar can be a text construct, a 2D icon, or a 3D model, respectively, depending on the technical nature of a particular cybercommunity. Having a 3D bodily image in cybercommunities may facilitate better bodily observation and self-identification. Moreover, having a 3D virtual avatar simply provides a participant with more ways to express himself. For example, rather than sending a rude message, a deviant individual may instruct his/her avatar to show its fists while sending the message, which may make the act more vivid, therefore, more

⁶See: Section 1.3.2 (*On technology*).

⁷See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

offensive.

Actually, the technical nature of a cybercommunity being based on text, 2D or 3D images will determine the nature and perception of deviance within the cybercommunity. A cybercommunity based on 3D services may be perceived as the most appropriate one to study different types of deviance, because its 3D graphic nature may enable wider range of activities. For example, the damage of community infrastructure due to cyber vandalism may only be observed in a 3D cybercommunity. Some forms of deviant behaviour in cybercommunities may be derived from the real world. Having this in mind, if individuals in 3D cybercommunities are able to carry their normal appearances from the real world to 3D cybercommunities, they may also carry their perceptions of deviance.

Based on these arguments, from a technological perspective, 3D cybercommunities are more appropriate contexts to carry out this empirical research.

From a social perspective, cybercommunities are created for various purposes.⁸ These differences generate diverse community cultures, norms, inter-personal relationships and personal identifications and, therefore, may result in different perceptions of deviance. For example, in a cybercommunity created for military training, violent behaviour may be a very important part of its community culture. Participants in such a cybercommunity may not have strong feelings about acts, such as flaming and abusive exchange. Whereas, in a cybercommunity that is designed for socialising or online community building, flaming may be considered by its members as a serious breach of community norms.

The specific social theme of a cybercommunity may determine its participants' perception of deviance. Following this, cybercommunities with a more general socialising or online community building purpose, or made up by various different sub-communities with different themes may be better places for observation. Moreover, general socialising cybercommunities may be better at reinforcing the concept that unlike participation in real world communities, participation in cybercommunities are more likely to be based on personal preference and interest, rather than social obligation or professional gain. However, cybercommunities designed for specific purposes may attract participants with more distinct motivations. For example, a computer game player may want to join a cybercommunity known for its gaming culture with the intention of winning the game and the prize money.

General socialising communities have attractions for more practical reasons. These cybercommunities may attract participants from various age groups. This may facilitate

⁸See: <http://www.virtualworldsreview.com/info/whatis.shtml>; accessed 11/12/2008.

the collection of more convincing results, without focusing on a particular age group. For example, certain cybercommunities, such as Disney's Toontown Online,⁹ are specially designed for children as young as seven to play in a brightly coloured cartoon environment. Unless one is interested in young children's perception of deviance in cybercommunities, an empirical research carried out in this site may not be representative.

The argument above is also highly dependent on the level of technical requirement and possibility of free access. Some cybercommunities such as Activeworlds,¹⁰ Cybertown¹¹ and Second Life¹² are known to be designed for 'techies', which means that participants are expected to have a relatively higher level of technical knowledge. For example, in Activeworlds, one has to learn from rather complicated manual scripts in order to participate in the community and it may take hours for a rather technically skilled individual to learn how to 'build' in Activeworlds. This high demand for technical skill may reduce the extent of personal attachment, in the sense that participants may be more aware of the fact that computer software is used as a tool to create. By the same token, personal attachment may be intensified by the amount of time and energy that is invested in the process of creation. This relatively high demand for technical skill may also deter some less technically skilled individuals, therefore, influence the potential findings and conclusions. Some practical issues should also be taken into consideration, such as credit card registration. Cybercommunities that offer free access may attract more participants and have a wider range of participants. Some of these cybercommunities are quite expensive to join. For example, annual citizenship of Activeworlds costs US\$83.4,¹³ which may not appeal to some individuals.

More importantly, free access and general purpose communities may attract individuals from different age groups, diverse social backgrounds and possibly, entering these cybercommunities with diverse perceptions of deviance. In such rich contexts, it may be easier to identify which kinds of deviance are more likely to be derived from the real world; which kinds of deviance are more likely to be the creation of the context of cybercommunities in general; and which kinds of deviance are more likely to be the production of specific computer technologies and social characteristics of particular kinds of cybercommunity. It may be better to consider cybercommunities with participants from different parts of the globe, rather than one or several particular nations, since it may add to the production of more general samples. Furthermore, it is important to carry out this research in a relatively stable technical and social context. Therefore,

⁹See: <http://www.virtualworldsreview.com/toontown/>; accessed 04/07/2007.

¹⁰See: <http://www.activeworlds.com>; accessed 04/07/2007.

¹¹See: <http://www.cybertown.com>; accessed 04/04/2007.

¹²See: <http://www.secondlife.com>; accessed 11/03/2007.

¹³See: <http://www.activeworlds.com/products/citizenships.asp>; accessed 04/07/2007.

cybercommunities that are often attacked by hackers and tend to under go significant software updates regularly, may not be suitable, because these activities may significantly interrupt empirical research. Moreover, it is important that the cybercommunity selected is well-established and popular. After the first stage of elimination, the researcher has discovered that although there are many cybercommunities online, some of them are unstable both technically and socially. Research on cybercommunities indicate that there are only ten 3D cybercommunities in the top thirty most popular and stable cybercommunities.¹⁴ Some of these cybercommunities are unstable technically, some of them are clearly created for children, others have very specific purposes. One of them — Activeworlds — is considered as unsuitable, because extensive criminological field work was carried out in the cybercommunity (Williams 2003).

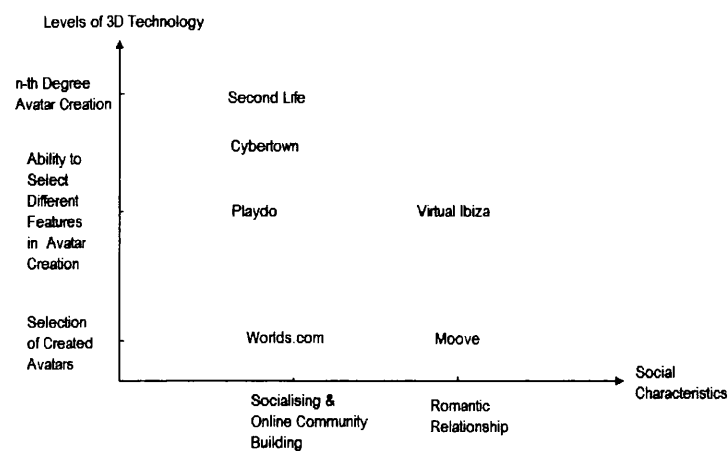


Figure 3.10: The final six 3D cybercommunities

To this end, there are only six cybercommunities left to be examined. Mapping the six cybercommunities using the model in figure 3.9, Second Life appears to be the most advanced, both technologically and sociologically (see: figure 3.10). While examining the final six cybercommunities, the focus is turned on the individual. Indeed, although each cybercommunity may have a life of its own, individual participants

may choose to behave differently.

- A cybercommunity may have a central theme, but individual participants may not be fully aware of it.

An individual may enter a cybercommunity known for its gaming culture to look for relationships. Another individual may enter a cybercommunity known for its relationship building culture to play some emotional games. The former may not be welcomed by the gaming community and the latter may be considered as deviant in the relationship building community. Besides, an individual's interest in a cybercommunity, degree of involvement with a cybercommunity and identification with his/her avatar in a cybercommunity, may change as he/she spends more time in the context.

¹⁴See: <http://www.virtualworldsreview.com/>; accessed 04/07/2007.

- A cybercommunity may have a set of rules, but an individual participant's choice of whether to follow these rules is very much a personal matter.

Possibly, credit card registration may lead to the possibility of being traced offline, which may deter an individual from deviating. However, punishing the avatar may be as effective as punishing the real person, if the individual considers his/her avatar as an inherent part of his/her *componential self*. This may be highly dependent on an individual's personal choice of, and identification with, his/her avatar. Moreover, an individual's technical capability may also influence his/her behaviour. For example, an individual may be fully aware of the computer's ability to record and trace, therefore, is more careful with the way he/she behaves in cybercommunities. On the other hand, he/she may choose to fully utilise his/her technical skills to escape punishment. Moreover, in practice, an individual may choose not to read through these initial sets of rules at all. With all these possibilities in mind, before carrying out the empirical research, the researcher could only assume that a higher degree of unique personal creation may lead to stronger sense of personal identification, which may influence individuals' behaviour.

- Individuals' behaviour may also be influenced by various technical and practical issues.

Some cybercommunities provide an individual participant with different ways of observing himself/herself such as first person, locked overhead view, chase camera and front camera. If an individual is aware of these different perspectives, he/she may be able to enjoy his/her existence in the cybercommunity from four perspectives, each of which may in different ways, influence his/her behaviour. In some cybercommunities, in order to be really involved, an individual has to be on top of the software. The amount of time and effort a participant needs to achieve this may determine the degree of attachment he/she feels towards the cybercommunity. An individual participant's financial ability may also influence his/her avatar creation, because in some cybercommunities, the most powerful characters are those who can afford to purchase sophisticated avatar accessories and other virtual assets.¹⁵

The possibility of selecting more than one cybercommunity to obtain richer and more convincing data is also thought of. However, in each of these six final choices, there are hundreds, if not thousands of sub-communities. Each of these sub-communities may have different technological and social characteristics, leading to different perceptions and manifestations of deviance and making the later decision on which sub-communities should be selected to carry out empirical research, very difficult. Actually, the sheer

¹⁵See: <http://www.bcs.org/server.php?show=ConWebDoc.3336>; accessed 04/02/2007.

size, population and social complexity of any of the six cybercommunities is able to provide diverse and rich data. Moreover, the Departmental Ethics Committee forbids the entry into any of these cybercommunities before the final choice is made. With all these considerations and practical constraints, the decision of conducting empirical research in Second Life is made because as seen in figure 3.10, it appears to be the most advanced cybercommunity, both technologically and sociologically.

Second Life is a highly imaginative environment, created by 3D graphic software. Technologically, it offers participants the opportunities to create fully textured and high-resolution avatars, which may be customised to the 'n-th' degree: every pixel of an avatar's shape, size and colour. With these software, a participants is able to create a real life replica of himself. The ever-changing environment has been described as Dali or Magritte's painting in 3D. Sociologically, Second Life does not fit the standard definition of many off-line computer games and on-line virtual reality games. It is a virtual society with a functional and successful economy. Residents of Second Life have no levels to go up, no wars to win and no evil enemies to vanish. Moreover, Second Life is not a game programmed by game creators and played by game players. Unlike most virtual worlds, the Second Life software creator, Linden Lab, only creates the landscape and some core elements. Everything else is designed and created by the residents. The residents have created Second Life into a user-defined world, in which they are able to explore, socialise and participate in individual and group activities, build and trade virtual properties.

If cybercommunities are extreme products of modernity, then Second Life may be seen as an exemplar of modernity. The thesis is an attempt to understand the nature of deviance in the environment of cybercommunities by examining its relationship with the modern world. Following this, it is appropriate to carry out the empirical work in a context that exemplifies to the highest extent — conditions of modernity. For this reason, the cybercommunity Second Life is selected to be the research field.

3.2 Research method

This section specifies the methods employed in this research. The process of re-engineering several social science research methods (e.g., participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a Second Life forum) to fit this research is described, alongside establishing cyber environments as a context for social research in its own right.

The exponential growth of Computer Mediated Communications (CMC) and its potential for profound impact on social, cultural, political and industrial practices are drawing keen interest from researchers. Earlier research on CMC includes how the technology is

adopted (e.g., Schmitz & Fulk 1991; Rice et al. 1990); CMC's role in creating culture and community (e.g., Baym 1998; Baym 1995; Ried 1995 & 1991; Beniger 1987); online work and play (e.g., Danet et al. 1998; Witmer 1998; Witmer et al. 1998; Witmer & Katzman 1998; Sproull & Kiesler 1991; Wambach 1991; Eisenberg et al. 1983); group dynamics in computer-mediated environment (e.g., Sudweeks & Rafaeli 1996; Kiesler & Sproull 1992; Adrianson & Hjelmquist 1991; Dubrovsky et al. 1991; Lea & Spears 1991; Smilowitz et al. 1988; McGuire et al. 1987); and interpersonal relationships (e.g., Walther & Burgoon 1992; Rice & Love 1987). Researchers have discovered that online research demands methods for data collection and analysis, which are specific to the medium (e.g., Kaplan 1992; Kiesler & Sproull 1992). Following this discovery, the traditional field methods of participant and non-participant observation, survey, interviewing and focus group research have been re-engineered and taken up by more current research to collect data from cybercommunities with different degrees of accomplishment (e.g., Boellstorff 2008; Williams 2003). Each of these has introduced the possibility and effectiveness of re-engineering traditional social science research methods to investigate computer mediated social settings.

Earlier experimental researchers view CMC as a tool. Psychologists for over a decade carried out experiments to comprehend the social, psychological and cultural impact of CMC technologies (e.g., Sproull & Kiesler 1991).

Rice (1989) provides a useful guide for CMC researchers. He highlights a distinction between the purposes of CMC research:

- Formative research
- Summative research

Formative research “acquires information useful in designing and improving project components, and provides feedback during the design, implementation, and use of [a computer] system” (Rice 1989, p. 448). Summative research “aims to summarise how [a computer] system affects those involved with the system as well as the wider social context, including intended and unintended effects, and to what extent the systems’ goals were achieved” (Rice 1989, p. 449). This article was written before the commercialisation of the Internet in 1995. At that time, CMC included “videotext, audiotext, personal computers, computer conferencing, word processing, computer bulletin boards, office information systems, and electronic and voice mail” (Rice 1989, p. 436).

During the past decade, the rapid development of CMC and the recognition of CMC's role as being more than a tool to facilitate the collection and analysis of data by social research have resulted in an increasing amount of summative research. Indeed, online

social setting created by CMC has become a new place for social inquiry.

The recognition and approval of the context of cybercommunities as a cultural artifact in its own right for social science research have stimulated much methodological discussion surrounding new ways to conduct research in these social and cultural phenomena. A fundamental question is: *Can traditional research methods be applied in this new field?*. Hine (2000) has summarised the current debate over the use of traditional research methods in online environment into three positions:

1. Online environments are fundamentally different and these differences present a challenge to traditional research methods. Researchers have to re-engineer traditional categories and concepts.
2. Online environments are substantially different, but are merely new contexts providing an opportunity for adapting existing research methods. Researchers have to be flexible.
3. Online environments do not present any new challenge. Traditional methods can be applied with some small alteration.

In this research, a position on both sides of the divide between perspective 1 & 2 is adopted. Certainly, the environment of cybercommunities is significantly different from all real life settings. However, these differences are not radical enough to rebuff the applications of traditional social research methods (cf. Williams 2003). Nevertheless, traditional social research methods must be modified with regards to the vastness of research populations; anonymous research subjects; multiple field sites; and advanced computer technologies within these field sites (cf. Williams 2003).

In this research, a period of participant observation is carried out to obtain a general picture of what is going on in Second Life, including various kinds of deviant acts and different technological tools available in Second Life, to pave the way for subsequent field work and design of research methods. Based on the design of the original grounded theory, further data collection cannot be planned in advance of the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This principle is observed during the research process.

The dark side of Second Life is revealed by both online and offline sources, including online news reports; community regulations, news reports, as well as, discussions of various forums and residential blogs in Second Life; offline news reports and magazines; and occasional TV shows. After the participant observation, a list of acts covering different activities that could be construed as deviant by different individuals, has been drafted to concretely map this dark side (the standard list is given in Appendix 1¹⁶). A survey

¹⁶This list contains 91 acts and is termed into the standard list in this thesis.

research consists of three questionnaires, is carried out to ask about individual participants' perception, experience and performance of deviant activities in the standard list. Various concepts have emerged from data collected in the questionnaire research, from which a list of questions are formulated (see: Appendix 10). The last stage of the empirical research consists of the posting of the list of questions in a Second Life residential forum for various participants to respond to.

3.2.1 Observation: participant

Observation is one purposeful, systematic way of watching, listening and collecting primary data on an interaction or a phenomenon as it takes place. The research method of observation can be categorised into (Kumar 2005):

1. *Participant Observation*

A researcher participates in the activities of the group being observed in the same manner as its members, with or without them knowing that they are being observed.

2. *Non-participant Observation*

A researcher does not get involved in the activities of the group, but remains a passive observer, watching and listening to its activities and drawing conclusions from this.



Figure 3.11: Rosser Writer

In this particular research, observation is adopted to obtain a basic picture of Second Life and identify some concepts at the very beginning of the empirical research. Given that the researcher has to register as a member of the cybercommunity, create her Second Life avatar and enter into Second Life with her created username, password and avatar — she is officially a member of the cybercommunity Second Life. Moreover, during her early days in Second Life, the researcher learns about the cybercommunity as any other new members. In short, the researcher does get involved in the activities in Second Life. Consequently, non-participant observations as an option is eliminated. The aim of this stage of empirical work is to get a general understanding of Second Life, both technologically and sociologically without causing any

change in the community members' behaviour. Hence, she is to have minimum interaction with other members and not to reveal her real world identity as a researcher during the process of observation. Furthermore, the researcher is not only an observer, but also plays the role of the computer — to watch, record and report.

Second Life offers its participants advanced software to create their unique avatars. It also offers ready-made default avatars for participants to choose from. Many participants, especially newcomers, use these default avatars. To be as unobtrusive as possible, therefore, achieving anonymity and minimum disturbance to lives in Second Life, a research avatar is selected from the list of 16 default avatars offered by Second Life at that time. To ensure maximum emotional detachment between the researcher and her online avatar, and to minimise any potential of personal bias, a male default avatar is chosen to be the research avatar and named as Rosser Writer (see: figure 3.11). Moreover, the researcher does not initiate any interaction with any member of the community. When other participants try to start conversation with the researcher's avatar, the researcher remains polite and is frank about the fact that 'he' is a new member. However, 'he' tries not to have any pro-longed interaction with any member of the cybercommunity, in order to keep minimal interference and maximum emotional detachment.

Participant observation has been adopted in various studies in cybercommunities (e.g., Boellstorff 2008; Williams 2003; Kendall 1995). Apparently, there is no standard way of conducting participant observation in general. Moreover, conducting participant observation in a cyber context adds more specific features that should be taken into consideration. Second Life consists of thousands of sub-cybercommunities. During this initial stage of empirical work, it is very important that the researcher does not look for deviant activities based on her own perception of deviance or, only observe in areas in which deviant activities (based on her own perception), are more likely to emerge. The participant observation is designed to learn about the context of Second Life and activities in this context. The researcher is to join Second Life and find her way in the cybercommunity as any other new member would. However, when deviant activities are encountered and identified, these activities are noted, paving the way for further field work. It needs to be stressed that due to the nature of this research and the liquidity of the notion of deviance, the researcher has to be very careful as not to involve her own perception of deviance during empirical work.

The researcher not only needs to observe how members of Second Life interact with one another, but also pay close attention to how individual participants interact with the technological context. The researcher may observe: how avatars navigate through the 3D cybercommunity; how avatars interact with objects in the cybercommunity; and

how avatars relate to the physical presence of other avatars during social interaction (Williams 2003). Hence, while doing this, the researcher needs to take account of the various social contexts of interaction, which might be able to reveal some insights into the social structures, politics of identity and community norms in Second Life. Moreover, close attention is paid to the language (both style and content) used by members of the cybercommunity.



Figure 3.12: Dialogue box

Second Life is equipped with computer software to show what is immediately said in a *dialogue box* appearing in the left corner of the computer screen (see: figure 3.12, bottom left). A full version of local conversations near an avatar could also be made available in a *chat board* (see: figure 4.8, top right corner). Members may also choose to demonstrate some emotions and body language via their avatars during

a conversation, which may be an important source of data to interpret and study social interactions and individual characteristics in Second Life.

In practice, the researcher has to decide which sub-communities to observe. The possibility of observing two or three of the most established and populated sub-communities with the intention to carry out a thorough observation to collect data is considered. This approach has been used by a previous criminological research in the cybercommunity Activeworlds (Williams 2003). Williams (2003) suggests that a researcher has to make sure that his choices of the two or three of the most popular and established sub-communities are not the most public and easy-to-find ones, because 'newbies' tend to congregate in the most public and easy-to-find areas. Observing in these areas might limit the richness and diversity of data. Williams (2003) suggests that until a participant has acclimatised to the tacit rules and conventions of a cybercommunity, he/she may have considered the virtual environment as a place where the controls and bonds that constrain behaviour in the offline world, are temporarily suspended. However, Williams' approach could not be adopted in this research, because of the sheer size and complexity of Second Life. During the initial period of this participant observation, the most popular and established sub-communities appear to be designed for fixed purposes of

sexual fantasy, gambling (banned in the course of the participant observation starting on July 25, 2007) and banking. Different sub-cybercommunities are created for different purposes and generate diverse community cultures, norms and inter-personal relationships, which may result in different perceptions of deviance. Therefore, the specific and fixed social themes in these popular sub-communities may determine their participants' perceptions of deviance, which may lead the investigation into specific kinds of deviance. With this in mind, the participant observation has to be carried out in different sub-communities created for different purposes.

Just as Second Life is chosen to be the research field, because it is the most advanced cybercommunity, both technologically and sociologically, the sub-cybercommunities selected in which to carry out participant observation are similarly advanced. Technologically, all sub-cybercommunities in Second Life are equipped with the most advanced software. Sociologically, befitting the purpose of this research, it might be more appropriate to select from sub-communities with a more general socialising and online community building purpose. These sub-communities might serve better at reinforcing the insight that unlike participation in real world communities, participation in cybercommunities tend not to be based on socially constructed notions, such as profession and social status. Individuals' participation in these sub-communities might be more likely to be based on personal preference and interest, rather than social obligation or professional gain. These in turn, may provide rich data. Finally, sub-communities with a general socialising and relationship building purpose may attract participations from different regions in the world, age groups, genders, as well as, social, political, educational and financial backgrounds, enabling the collection of more divergent data.

At the time of drafting research methods, Second Life appears to consist of 13 main sub-communities (see: figure 3.13):¹⁷

1. Second Life Brasil
2. The L Word
3. Anshe Chung's Dreamland
4. NBA
5. STA TRAVEL
6. Melting Dots
7. The Azure Island

¹⁷See: <https://secure-web4.secondlife.com/join/index.php>; accessed 01/05/2007.

8. Second Life Netherland
9. Big Pond
10. Anshe Chung's Dreamland (Chinese Version)
11. Pontiac Motorati
12. BEN & JERRY's
13. Second House of Sweden



Figure 3.13: Selecting sub-communities

specific purposes, e.g., 'The L Word' is essentially a film club and 'Pontiac Motorati' is created for individuals to submit their ideas of dream businesses. Only two sub-communities, 'Anshe Chung's Dreamland' and 'The Azure Island' appear to be created for general purposes. If the participant observation is to be carried out within these two sub-communities, the next problem would be to select regions within in them. At the time of observation, 'Anshe Chung's Dreamland' consists of more than 500 regions, which are organised into 16 different themed zones, each of them has a unique life type, experience and architectural style.¹⁸ The capital of 'Anshe Chung's Dreamland', 'Plush City', was the largest business and entertainment district in Second Life. 'The Azure Island', made up by over 13 'square kilometres' of virtual land, is one of the largest resident owned and operated continents with over a thousand residents.¹⁹ There is no enough information available to make informed decision on which regions within these sub-communities to observe.

With all these complexities and confusions in mind, the final decision is to enter Second

Some of these sub-communities are targeted at individuals from particular countries, e.g., 'Second House of Sweden' is designed for participants from Sweden; 'Melting Dots' is in Japanese; and 'Anshe Chung's Dreamland (Chinese Version)' is obviously designed to attract Chinese participants. Some of these sub-communities are designed by real world commercial companies, e.g., 'STATRAVEL'. Others are created for

¹⁸See: <https://secure-web4.secondlife.com/join/index.php>; accessed 01/07/2007.

¹⁹See: <https://secure-web4.secondlife.com/join/index.php>; accessed 01/07/2007.



Life as any other newly registered resident and let findings and experiences take the participant observations forward.

The timing of observation is very important. Second Life has international membership, residents visit the cybercommunity at different times. Consequently, successful collection of representative and rich observational data is dependent on when observation takes place. Observation carried out in fixed time slots may only provide data of participants from a certain time zone in the world. For example, assuming that individuals participate in cybercommunities in non-working hours and at night, observations carried out at early morning hours may only capture activities of community members from the America. The general principle, therefore, is to observe Second Life in different time periods.

3.2.2 Questionnaire: self-completion

After participant observation, a standard list of 91 acts covering different potentially deviant acts is reflexively constructed (see: Appendix 1). In addition, a list of 39 motivations for becoming residents of Second Life is compiled (see: Appendix 4). The construction of these acts and motivations is based on data collected during the participant observation, as well as, other sources both online and offline, such as previous research findings (e.g., Williams 2003), Second Life community regulations, discussions of various forums and residential blogs in Second Life, and occasional TV shows.

These standard lists are the bases for the second stage of empirical work. Three different questionnaires involving the standard lists are sent to three different samples of participants in Second Life. The first questionnaire is a general public survey asking about the participants' opinion concerning the nature of deviance in Second Life. The second questionnaire asks about the participants' experience of deviance in second Life. The third questionnaire asks the participants to report their own deviant behaviours in Second Life. These questionnaires are titled:

1. Opinion Survey of Residents on the Nature of Deviance in Second Life
2. Residential Survey on the Experience of Deviance in Second Life
3. Residential Self Report on the Performance of Deviance in Second Life

In the first questionnaire, the participants are asked to provide information about their perception of each of the 91 different types of potentially deviant acts in the standard list by selecting one of the five response categories:

- 1 = Not at all (deviant)

- 2 = Slightly (deviant)
- 3 = Certainly (deviant)
- 4 = Very (deviant)
- 5 = Don't know

The participants are also asked to provide information about the extent that they are motivated by each of the 39 different motivations (see: Appendix 4) by selecting one of the five response categories:

- 1 = Not at all (motivated)
- 2 = Not very much (motivated)
- 3 = A bit (motivated)
- 4 = Quite a lot (motivated)
- 5 = Very much (motivated)

In the second and third questionnaire, the participants are asked to provide information about the number of times that they have experienced or performed each of the potentially deviant acts in the standard list, during their last ten substantial²⁰ visits in Second Life by selecting one of the five response categories:

- 1 = 0 (times)
- 2 = 1-5 (times)
- 3 = 6-10 (times)
- 4 = 11-15 (times)
- 5 = more than 15 (times)

If a participant refuses to answer a question, the value 0 would be returned automatically. Hence, each of the participants would contribute to a score between 0 to 5 for each of the 39 motivation questions and 91 potentially deviant act questions.

The 39 motivations are grouped into 5 different categories for analytical purposes:

1. Modernity related motivations

²⁰Preferably, each of those visits is longer than an hour.

2. Community related motivations
3. Self-identity related motivations
4. Commerce related motivations
5. Leisure related motivations

The 91 acts are grouped into 8 different categories for analytical purposes. These are acts related to:

1. Avatar
2. Avatar's property
3. Avatar's identity & privacy
4. SL community damage
5. SL community norms
6. Real world norms
7. Powerful groups
8. Text & graphic

Observing the principles of carrying out the entire research within the environment of Second Life and of using technologies available in Second Life as far as possible, these three questionnaires have to be sent and retrieved online. The questionnaires are generated with PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor) by the researcher. A covering letter is prepared for each of these three questionnaires (see: Appendix 5, 6 & 7). Within each covering letter, there is a web link leading to the particular questionnaire.²¹ The web links are located in the public profile folder of the researcher's university web page. A database hosted by the university is built to store the retrieved data. The database is password protected and only accessible to the researcher and a technician working for the university. Each covering letter contains a web link in the form of a *Note card*, which is sent to a sample of residents' *Inbox* in Second Life, or in the form of a *IM* (Instant Message). Each resident is only approached once to avoid the potential danger of being accused of spamming. However, two of the participants still feel spammed:

²¹See: <http://www.cs.swan.ac.uk/SLquestionnaire1/>;
<http://www.cs.swan.ac.uk/SLquestionnaire2/>;
<http://www.cs.swan.ac.uk/SLquestionnaire3/>.

- “I am an alt, not a main, so I do not do much of anything here — and it is against the TOS to spam people, so I have abuse reported you. If you wish to conduct a survey you should seek permission of the Lindens first”.
- “The fact that you’ve spammed me with this instead of finding me and speaking with me directly means that you will now not receive my 3 1/2 years of experience in social behavior within Second Life”.

(Email correspondence from correspondents, April 5 to May 30, 2008)

There is a strong bias against survey research among participants in cybercommunities, which may be connected to hacker culture. *The New Hacker’s Dictionary*²² defines ‘social science number’ as a statistic that is content-free, or nearly so a measure derived via methods of questionable validity from data of a dubious and vague nature (Raymond 1996). This bias may be brought about by various poorly thought out and badly executed surveys in various cybercommunities. Hence, the questionnaire research is carried out after participant observation, through which the most appropriate method possible to carry out this questionnaire research is designed. This bias or, perhaps, lack of trust is evident during the questionnaire research:

- “no ty good luck”.
- “go F*** yourself”.
- “I don’t do surveys, sorry, unless I am paid a consulting fee, it’s just a waste of my time and a needless scraping of my data”.
- “Hello there. I’d be happy to help with your research, but as you know there are many fishing attempts all over the internet, and before I take your questionnaire I would like to talk with you a moment to make sure this is not a scam or attempt to steal information”.
- “I’m not doing a thing until I’ve been informed as to why you’re contacting myself specifically, as well as where you got my name from”.
- “I really would like to have a chat with you”.
- “I really don’t appreciate the way you approached me with this survey. Had you asked me rather than just giving me an indiscriminate Note card, I would have been likely to answer your survey”.

(Email correspondence from correspondents, April 5 to May 30, 2008)

However, there are also positive feedbacks:

- “did that . . . you are welcome :o”
- “Hope that helps your research :-)”

²²A book compiling a large body of on-line jargon and cultural references (see: http://www.ccil.org/jargon/jargon_toc.html; accessed 01/07/2007).

- “very good survey. . . ”
- “was ok ty”
- “done!”

(Email correspondence from correspondents, April 5 to May 30, 2008)

Although there is a very limited amount of literature on Internet-based survey methods, past research shows that Internet-based survey research often results in inadequate levels of participation (Pitkow & Recker 1994). Kiesler and Sproull (1986) consider the self-administered electronic questionnaire as a research tool, but their focus is on the nature of response not the response rate. Kaplan (1992) proposes a way of describing multiple-choice questionnaires for online representation, but fails to address methods that may increase response rate. Smith (1997) compares email and Web-based survey techniques and addresses the wide variances of response rates between online questionnaires and traditional paper-and-pencil ‘snail mail’ instruments. Witmer et al. (1998) examine the problematic nature of response rates to email questionnaires by exploring the extent to which ‘snail mail’ survey techniques may be applied to the online environment.

In the vastness of Second Life, it was very difficult to determine where and how to recruit research participants. Ideally, each of these questionnaires should be sent to all participants in Second Life. However, at the time of empirical research, 12,804,302 user accounts are found in Second Life via the *search* engine on Second Life in world tool bar.²³ Moreover, technologically, Second Life does not allow a participant to send copies of a notecard to all participants *simultaneously*. Sending notecards to all participants *one by one* is extremely time-consuming and impossible to accomplish considering the time constraint of the research. Due to these practical constraints, three samples have to be selected from the population. The research would be carried out by sending copies of the notecards to everyone in these samples on an individual basis. Whilst it is possible to ask the same sample population to answer all three questionnaires, because of the sheer size of these questionnaires and the absence of incentive (e.g., financial), such an approach would likely lead to an extremely low response rate.

At the time of research, the only information available is a list of last names of the participants in Second Life.²⁴ This list is updated on an hourly basis, as Linden Lab keeps adding new last names for new residents to select from when they register to join Second Life. The list of last names includes the ones that are still available for new member to select from on the registration page²⁵ and the ones which are no longer available on the

²³See: <http://slnamewatch.com/>; accessed 15/12/2008, 11:00.

²⁴See: <http://slnamewatch.com/>; accessed 15/12/2008, 11:00.

²⁵See: <https://secure-web0.secondlife.com/join/>; accessed 15/12/2008.

registration page. Although the list is updated on an hourly basis, it is never complete at any time, because some of the very rare last names are very difficult to discover. The proprietor of the website, known as *Adz Childs* in Second Life, estimates that there are about 500 last names missing from the database at any time, based on the internal ID numbers that are visible to him.²⁶ Adz Childs gathers information about last names in Second life via his *alt account* (second account) in Second Life, which looks like Bender (a mental robot) from Futurama.²⁷ This Bender-looking robot logs into Second Life, doing a last names search and collecting 101 names through a PHP script, which extracts information from secondlife.com's *Join Now Page*,²⁸ then sends those names to the SLNameWatch server.²⁹ Any changes to the available last names are detected within an hour. Adz Childs claims that he³⁰ is able to verify that the number of registered users on the Second Life's economic status page³¹ is accurate, at least to within 96%, because he has counted nearly every one of them.³² This claim actually infers a high level of accuracy of his own statistical information at SLnameWatch.³³

Sampling methods are usually grouped into two categories: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, the sample is taken as representative of the population, whereas in non-probability sampling, the sample may still be used to suggest something about the population, but not on the same statistical grounds (Robson 2002). Since this survey is a general public opinion survey in Second Life, in theory, the result should be of representative value on a more robust statistical ground. The sampling method for this survey should be selected from those within the category of probability sampling: simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling and multistage sampling (Robson 2002). A suitable method has to be selected based on the purpose and constraints of the research.

In this research, many practical constraints have posted limits on the selection of sampling methods. Some of the sampling methods, such as simple random sampling, systematic sampling and stratified sampling require a numbered list of the population (Fowler 2008). In this case, the names of all participants (12,804,302) in Second Life is impossible to acquire. Sometimes, a complete list of the population may not exist, or be available or accessible for sampling, due to a number of real world constraints, such as privacy

²⁶Personal correspondence via goggle mail with Adz Childs.

²⁷See: <http://nwn.blogs.com/nwn/2008/01/whats-in-a-name.html>; accessed 15/12/2008.

²⁸See: <https://secure-web0.secondlife.com/join/>; accessed 15/12/2008.

²⁹See: <http://nwn.blogs.com/nwn/2008/01/whats-in-a-name.html>; accessed 15/12/2008.

³⁰The avatar looks like a young boy (see: <http://nwn.blogs.com/nwn/2008/01/whats-in-a-name.html>; accessed 15/12/2008).

³¹See: http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php; accessed 15/12/2008.

³²See: <http://nwn.blogs.com/nwn/2008/01/whats-in-a-name.html>; accessed 15/12/2008.

³³See: <http://slnamewatch.com/>; accessed 15/12/2008.

and confidentiality issues, data access problems, etc (Freedman & Taub 2006). However, a list may be constructed by combining multiple lists (Freedman & Taub 2006). In this case, in theory, a list might potentially be constructed by combing the search results of all user accounts under each last name on the list provided by SLNameWatch via the *Search* engine on Second Life in world tool bar. However, in practice, this process is extremely time-consuming, therefore, impossible to complete within the time constraint of this research. Moreover, it would provide a list of more than 12 million participants — impossible to be recruited and too large to be analysed within the time constraint of the research. Therefore, the research sample has to be defined narrowly.

At this stage, there are only two sampling methods that have not been eliminated from the category of probability sampling: cluster sampling and multistage sampling. Cluster sampling involves dividing the population into groups/clusters, selecting a random sample from these clusters, then including all observations in the selected clusters in the sample (Robson 2002). Multistage sampling is an extension of cluster sampling, which involves taking samples from samples. Due to the practical constraints of time and money, using all the sample elements in all selected clusters is impractical and sometimes, unnecessary. Hence, instead of using all the elements contained in the selected clusters, some elements are randomly selected from each cluster. Hence, constructing the clusters is the first stage and deciding what elements within the cluster are to be used is the second stage.

Multistage sampling is frequently used when there is an absence of a complete list of all members of the target population (Bevan & Drapper 1965). In this case, firstly, a random sample of last names is selected and, secondly, a random sample of names (first-last name combinations) is selected within each of the previously selected last names. Without a complete list of names (first-last name combinations) of all participants in Second Life, the strategy is practical and efficient, because lists of names are needed only for the set of last names actually included at the first stage of the sample. The general advantages of multistage sampling are convenience, economy and efficiency. In this case, it is the only possible sampling strategy in the absence of a complete list of all participants in Second Life. However, the disadvantages of multistage sampling have to be considered as well, such as lower accuracy due to higher sampling error.

The size of the sample is largely dependent on the evaluation of many methodological and practical constraints. Methodological constraints include the size of the population, degree of accuracy, degree of variability in population and non-response rate. Practical constraints include budget resources, time constraints (Robson 2002) and, in this case, technological limitations.

In general, the three most important factors in calculating a sample size are population, confidence interval and confidence level. The estimated population size in Second Life is 12,804,302. Sampling error occurs simply as a result of the processing of drawing a sample that does not estimate exactly the population size. The larger the sample size, the more likely the sample value will be close to the actual population value. Confidence level is the percentage of certainty that the true population value is within a specified range of values (Freedman & Taub 2006). Usually, the confidence level is set to be 95%. Confidence intervals are often denoted by a single number identifying the margin of errors, such as the often used +5% or -5%, which is the estimation of the range of values within which the true population value is likely to fall. There are statistical tables in many research texts and computerised software that calculate the sample size based on population size, confidence interval and confidence level. Based on a calculation by an online statistical calculator,³⁴ with the population size of 12,804,302, the confidence level of 95% and the confidence interval of 5%, the sample size should be 384.

In theory, 384 copies of each of the three questionnaires should be *retrieved* from individuals in Second Life, in order for the findings to have representative value on a more robust statistical ground. However, there is always the difference between the number of survey sent and the number retrieved, because of the problem of non-response. In this research, non-response might occur for a number of reasons, such as refusal, not participating in Second Life during the period of the survey research, computer crash, illness, death, etc. Moreover, since Second Life has a international membership, some participants might not be able to participate in this research due to a language barrier:

- “sorry but i dont speak good english im germany”.

(Email correspondence from a correspondent, April 14, 2008)

Past research shows that Internet-based survey research often results in inadequate levels of participant (Pitkow & Recker 1994). In traditional survey research, a 50% response rate is usually considered as being adequate (Babbie 1998). However, in unsolicited surveys, response rates around 20% are not uncommon (Fink 1995). In the case of Internet-based research, response rates may be 10% or even lower (e.g., Patrick et al. 1995). Regarding the length of these questionnaires, although there is no evidence to support the hypothesis of a short questionnaire would yield higher response rates than a longer version of similar content (e.g., Patrick et al. 1995), it is decided to keep the questionnaires as short as possible to yield a higher rate of completion. A computer screen is able to display around 670 characters, about 33 lines. The first questionnaire is designed to be 21 screens. Both the second questionnaire and the third questionnaire

³⁴See: http://www.macorr.com/ss_calculator.htm; accessed 15/12/2008.

are designed to be 16 screens. Aesthetically, the questionnaires are designed in a way to encourage completion from participants, who have the option to press the 'delete' key at any time.³⁵

In this case, assuming the response rate is 10%, for each of these three questionnaires, 3,840 copies have to be sent out to retrieve the minimum recommended size of 384. Moreover, the actual number of participants in Second Life has always been a controversial subject.³⁶ Linden Research uses an email account based registration system and defines a Resident as "a uniquely named avatar with the right to log into Second Life, trade Linden Dollars and visit the Community pages".³⁷ Several accounts might belong to the same person. Furthermore, once registered, an account remains in existence even without any degree of user activity.

According to the number of registered accounts in Second Life, its population is 2,325,015 on January 3, 2007.³⁸ However, an online source estimates the real number of unique users to be 1,974,607 in January 2007.³⁹ Another online source estimates the real number of active and unique users, who login regularly, to be in the 200,000 to 230,000 range,⁴⁰ which is between 8.6% and 9.9% of all user accounts. Supporting these estimated figures, Philip Linden once told a Second Life blogger that about only 10% of newly created residents are still signing in weekly, three months later.⁴¹

Twenty three months later (2,325,015 on January 3, 2007), 12,804,302 account are found in Second Life.⁴² If the sampling strategy is to be designed based on the estimation that only 10% of the registered accounts are active in Second Life, then far more than 3,840 copies of each of the three questionnaires have to be sent out. Suppose that out of 3,840 participants, only 10% of them are active: this gives the figure of 384 members. Out of the 384 active participants, a 10% of response rate is expected, which means only 38.4 copies would be returned. Conversely, using the same assumption, in order to retrieve 384 copies, 38,400 copies have to be sent out, which is impossible. Based on

³⁵A sample of Questionnaire 1 can be found in Appendix 11. The questions in Questionnaire 2 and Questionnaire 3 are provided in Appendix 12 and Appendix 13, respectively.

³⁶See: 1. http://many.corante.com/archives/2006/12/12/second_life_what_are_the_real_numbers.php; accessed 15/03/2008.

2. <http://www.news.com/CountingtherealSecondLifepopulation/210010436146943.html>; accessed 15/03/2008.

³⁷See: <http://secondliferesearch.blogspot.com/2007/03/second-life-residents-statistics.html>; accessed 12/03/2008.

³⁸See: <http://www.news.com/Counting-the-real-Second-Life-population/2100-1043-6146943.html>; accessed 10/03/2008.

³⁹See: http://www.swivel.com/data_sets/show/1003390; accessed 10/03/2008.

⁴⁰See: <http://www.news.com/Counting-the-real-Second-Life-population/2100-1043-6146943.html>; accessed 10/03/2008.

⁴¹See: http://nwn.blogs.com/nwn/2006/11/new_world_numbe.html; accessed 10/03/08.

⁴²See: <http://slnamewatch.com/>; accessed 15/12/2008, 11:00.

these findings and following the principle of grounded theory, 1500 copies of each of the three questionnaires are sent out in 3 intervals of 500 copies.

Faced with a new and apparently very unusual research field, the only possible way to carry out the questionnaire research is 'learning by doing'. The participant observation reveals that covering letters have to be sent out on an individual basis. In order to send any message to another avatar, an avatar has to be created. To carry out this questionnaire research, three different avatars are created to send out three different covering letters:

1. Researcher Sommer for the first questionnaire
2. Researcher Sigal for the second questionnaire
3. Researcher Segall for the third questionnaire

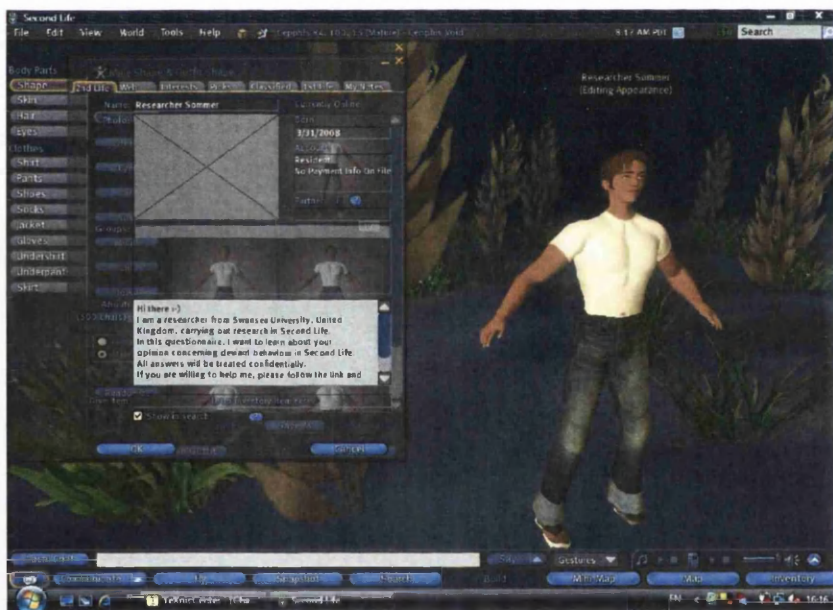


Figure 3.14: 2nd life profile

This way potential incoming messages from the respondents of these three different questionnaires would be more manageable: possible messages from individuals, complaining about, or giving suggestion about, each of the questionnaires would be sent to one of the avatars' email accounts. These three different avatars look the same as the default male avatar used in

the participant observation. This look is used again, because during the participant observation, it seems that this boy/girl next-door look is the most commonly occurring in Second Life. In the '2nd life profile' of each the research avatars, a basic description of the particular avatar and the associated questionnaire are provided with a link to the questionnaire (see: figure 3.14). Perhaps, some participants might use the search tool to look for the researcher avatars upon receiving the covering letters. Providing some descriptions of the research avatars and three questionnaires in the '2nd life profile' of each of these three researcher avatars, might be able to gain more trust from participants.

Moreover, in this way, the participants are practically being invited to participate for the second time, which might increase response rate.

There are two possible methods for sending the covering letters to residence in Second Life without causing too much disturbance. The first method is dropping covering letters, containing the links in the form of notecards in the *Give item* boxes (see: figure 3.15, bottom right) of the avatars selected based on multistage sampling. Dropping a notecard in another avatar's give item box is a formal way of communication between avatars in Second Life. In this way, a covering letter retains its format status as a letter with appropriate line breaks and spaces. If a covering letter of the first questionnaire in the form of a notecard is sent to a participant named Rosser Writer (the avatar used in the participant observation), he would receive an automatically generated email sent by Second Life, telling him that "Researcher Sommer has given you a note card named 'An invitation to participate in a questionnaire :-)'".

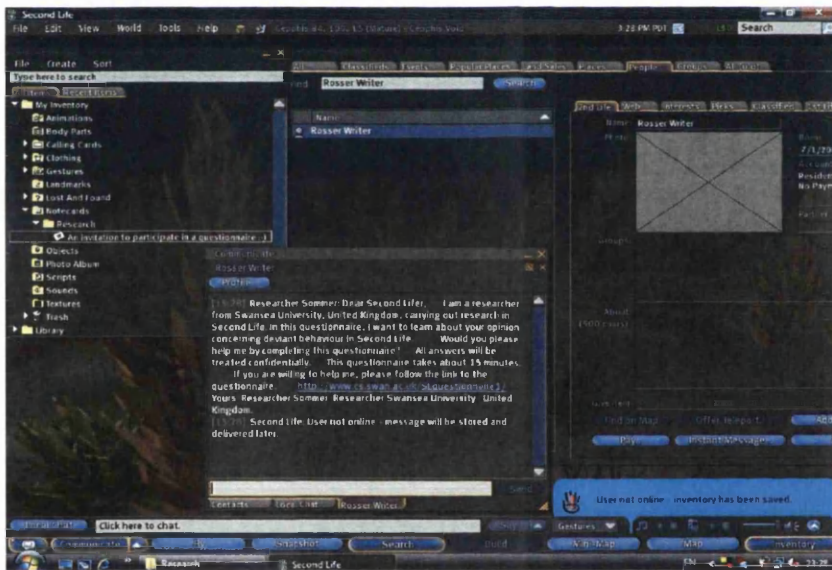


Figure 3.15: Give item and IM

message from Researcher Sommer to him will be automatically blocked. If Rosser Writer chooses to discard the Note card, Researcher Sommer will not hear anything from him. If Rosser Writer chooses to keep the notecard, an automatically generated email would be sent to Researcher Sommer, saying "Rosser Writer has accepted your inventory offer in Second Life".

The second method is to send copies of covering letters as Instant Messages (IM). Sending an IM to another avatar is a less formal way of communication between avatars in Second Life. In this way, a covering letter loses its formal status as a letter (see: fig-

The same message would appear in a popup window, the next time Rosser Writer participates in Second Life (see: figure 3.16, top right). Rosser Writer would have the freedom to choose whether to keep, discard or mute the Note card (see: figure 3.16, top right). If Rosser Writer chooses the *mute* (the sender) option, any further mes-

ure 3.16, bottom). If a covering letter of the first questionnaire is sent in the form of IM to a participant named Rosser Writer, he would receive an automatically generated email sent by Second Life containing the IM. He would also receive the IM the next time he participates in Second Life (see: figure 3.16, bottom).

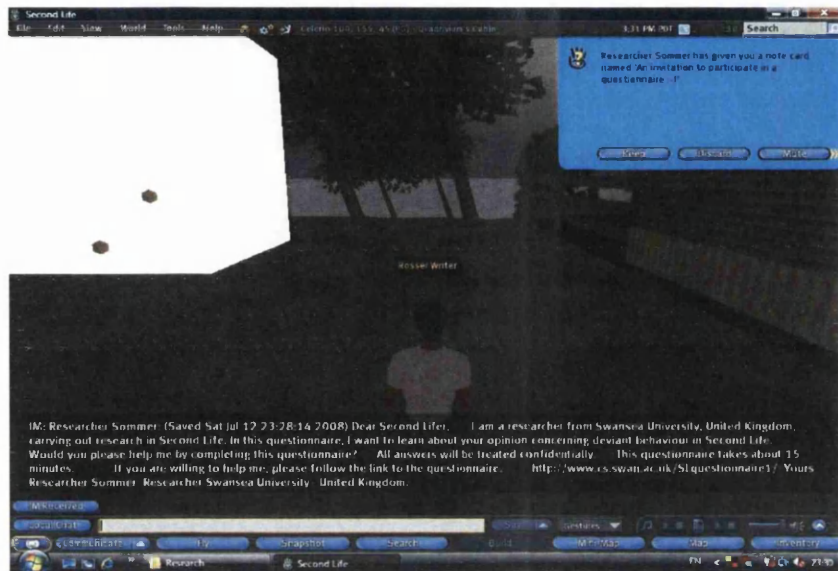


Figure 3.16: Covering letter received

There isn't any previous knowledge of which of the two methods would generate a better response, any decision about how to actually carry out this research could not be made based on past research. It could only be decided based on speculations about what the participants might feel when they receive covering letters in these two differ-

ent formats. Initially, it is speculated that perhaps, participants would like to receive covering letters in the form of notecards, because they could simply discard the received notecards if they are not interested without even opening them. If they felt offended or threatened by the presence of researchers in Second Life, or by being approached by strange researcher avatars, they could choose to protect themselves by blocking the researcher avatars. If a covering letter is sent in the form of IM, it would appear on the screen automatically, which might make the receiver feel he/she has been spammed.

With all these in mind, it is decided to send out 500 copies of the covering letter for each of the three questionnaires in the form of a notecard. Any further action would be dependent on the response of the participants. Two weeks after the first 500 copies of covering letter being sent, only 8 complete copies of questionnaires are received in the database. Although according to past research such a low response rate is nothing out of the ordinary, it is suspected that most receiver might have simply chosen to discard the notecards received. Perhaps, IM as a more straight forward method of communication, would generate a better response rate in Second Life. At least, when a covering letter is sent via IM, the receiver would have to look at it. A short correspondence with a questionnaire participant confirms IM as a better way of communication:

- “Researcher Sommer: by the way, do you think IM is the best way to contact people, because I really do not mean to offend anyone here”.
- “IM is the ONLY way to do things in HERE ... yet, you are experiencing the reactions of people who dont WANT to think about tomorrow ... people who dont WANT their transgressions talked abotu, etc. ... these are the ones who KNOW what is right and wrong and dont want to talk about it”.

(Email correspondence from a correspondent, April 19, 2008)

The rest of the covering letters are sent in the form of IM. Between April 20 and May 9, 1000 copies of covering letter of each of the three questionnaires are sent out:

Timeline			
Date	Questionnaire	Method	Number
April 5 2008	Questionnaire 1	Note card	500
April 14 2008	Questionnaire 2	Note card	500
April 15 2008	Questionnaire 3	Note card	500
April 20 2008	Questionnaire 1	IM	500
April 21 2008	Questionnaire 2	IM	500
April 22 2008	Questionnaire 3	IM	500
April 29 2008	Questionnaire 1	IM	500
May 8 2008	Questionnaire 2	IM	500
May 8 2008	Questionnaire 3	IM	500

On June 1, 2008, 83 copies of the first questionnaire are retrieved, yielding a response rate of 5.53%; 89 copies of the second questionnaire are retrieved, yielding a response rate of 5.67%; and 73 copies of the third questionnaire are retrieved, yielding a response rate of 4.89%. On average, the response rate is 5.36%. As already noted, such a low response rate is expected. Moreover, some of the retrieved copies of questionnaires are incomplete. In the analysis of data, only the largely complete copies of these questionnaires are included.

3.2.3 Discussion in a Second Life forum

From questionnaire research, a list of 16 questions is constructed (see: Appendix 10). The list of questions is the base for the third stage of empirical work. The list of questions is posted in a Second Life residential forum named *Resident Answers*. The purpose of this exercise is to initiate and stimulate discussions and debates about the 16 questions among participants in Second Life, in an environment that are sociologically native to them.

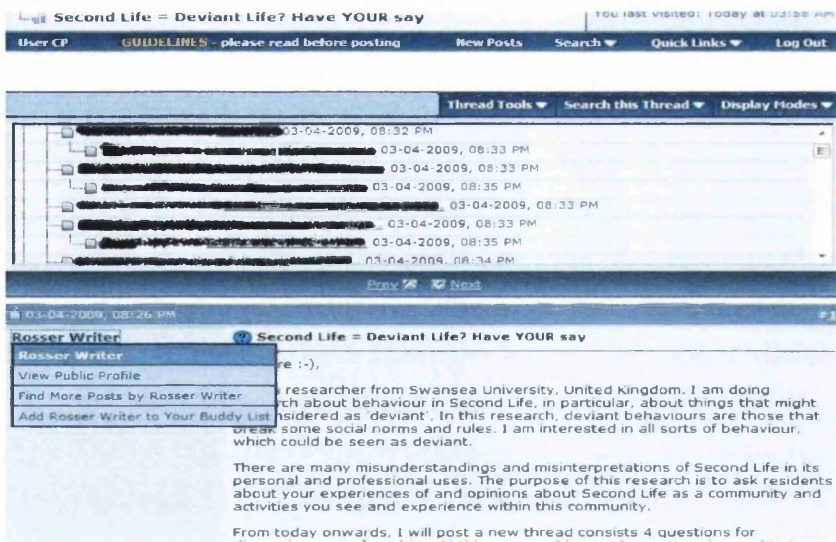


Figure 3.17: The post

on an individual basis, instead the researcher enters an environment where they are accustomed to being and inter-relating with others. This way, the power imbalance between the researcher and the participants may be ameliorated. Consequently, the participants may have more confidence to speak their minds.

To begin, a covering letter (see: Appendix 8) with the list of questions is posted to form the beginning of a thread (8:26 p.m., March 4, 2009) (see: figure 3.17, bottom). the post is addressed to all participants in the forum, therefore, individual participants might feel less sought after. Individual participants are able to voluntarily click on the post, read through it and respond to the questions.

	Sticky: Step by Step: How to Transfer Land (1 2 3 4 5 ... Last Page)	10-16-2008 10:31 AM by	82	6,204
	Sticky: The Comprehensive Guide to Optimizing Parcels for Search (1 2 3)	10-16-2008 10:31 AM by	32	3,283
	Sticky: Please do not post products for sale in this forum	03-21-2008 10:27 PM by	0	257
	Sticky: About This Forum <--- please read me first!	12-28-2006 07:02 AM by	1	5,455
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> just ignore and let this one die (1 2 3 4 5 ... Last Page)	Today 09:32 PM by	59,358	515,793
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Second Life = Deviant Life? Have YOUR say Rosser Writer	Today 09:31 PM by	1	2
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save me from the bunnies! (1 2 3 4 5)	Today 09:28 PM by	70	774
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> So, if the guy who owns my sim doesnt pay his tiers.... (1 2)	Today 09:17 PM by	23	384

Figure 3.18: The front page

The previous stage of empirical work has revealed that some participants in Second Life feel uncomfortable when approached by a researcher on an individual basis. Bearing this in mind, in this stage of empirical work, research respondents are not approached and recruited

Their responses would then form a thread (see: figure 3.17, top). The post appears on the front page of Resident Answers (see: figure 3.18). The approach of using a Second Life residential forum to carry out empirical research resonates with the idea of taking advantage of existing structures and technologies in Second

Life to carry out the empirical research.

In a traditional social science research, a researcher brings research tools, such as recorders to a research field. In this research, software tools are native to social interactions in Second Life. During the research process, some technologies embedded in the forum have made it very convenient for the researcher to collect and process data — to search, view and print the thread, as well as, search for individual posts within the thread. The *Thread Tools* tab (see: figure 3.17, above the thread) allows the researcher to print the thread in a printable format, email the tread and subscribe to the thread. The *Search* tab allows the researcher to search for posts by key words or avatar names (see: figure 3.17). This tool is necessary, because many participants appear to ignore the main theme of this thread and talk among themselves about other totally unrelated issues, and others appear to mix their responses with other unrelated topics. Moreover, all posts are numbered (see: figure 3.19, top right) and time-stamped (see: figure 3.19, top left). Using these software tools in Second Life to carry out research may help to bridge the cap between the researcher and the respondents. Moreover, this approach proves to be extremely convenient. Besides software tools that are built into the system architecture of Second Life, other tools that are built into the computer are also used in this research. For example, the (Ctrl + Prt Scr/Sys Rq) function on the keyboard makes taking snapshots a very easy task. Indeed, in the digital world of Second Life, everything is data and can be automatically collected and processed.

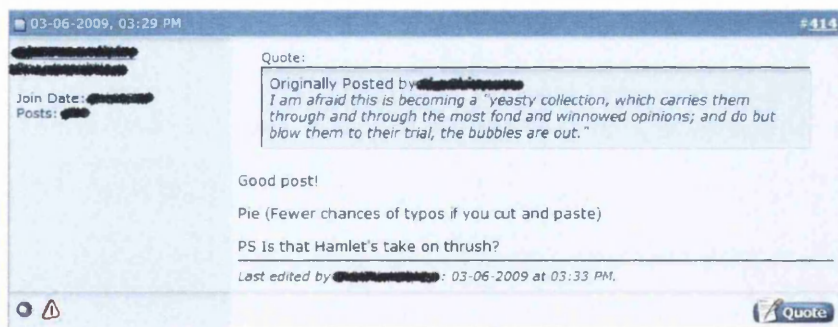


Figure 3.19: “Yeasty collection”

the bubbles are out” ”(see: figure 3.19).

The quote from Hamlet consists of three mistakes. In the forum, the *Quote* tab makes

⁴³HAMLET: “He did comply with his dug before he suck’d it. Thus has he, and many more of the same bevvy that I know the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter—a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fann’d and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial—the bubbles are out” [5.2] (Shakespeare 2003, p. 245).

Quoting from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*,⁴³ a respondent wrote: “I am afraid this is becoming a “yeasty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial,

quoting an easy and mistake free task. The *Quote* tab allows a participant to quote parts of a post by another participant and respond only to the particular parts (see: figure 3.21). These tools are necessary considering the amount of messy texts in the thread that are not related to the research questions.

Second Life hosts 80 different kinds of forums⁴⁴ covering 9 main categories that residents might be interested in participating, namely:

1. Linden Links
2. Resident Forums
3. Resident Conversation
4. Content Creation
5. Classifieds
6. Feedback
7. Technical Talk
8. International
9. Group Life

The purpose of these forums is to promote discussion and education about Second Life, and provide a platform for residents to exchange ideas honestly and openly while maintaining a respect for the views of other individuals.⁴⁵ A resident needs to enter his/her username and password, which are the same as his/her Second Life username and password to log in to the forums. His/Her Second Life username would appear next to every post that he/she posts in the forum. By clicking on the username, other participants are able to view the public profile of the resident, find more posts by the resident and add the resident to their lists of friends (see: figure 3.17).

Each of the categories of forums is dedicated to its specific purposes. For example, classified forums are for residents to post announcements when they have a product, service or property to sell or rent, or when they need some help with a project.⁴⁶ For another example, group forums are created for specific groups, such as *Second Life Sailing Federation*, *SL Japan* and *Bisexuals in Second Life*.⁴⁷ Each of these forums may be seen as

⁴⁴See: <http://forums.secondlife.com/index.php?>; accessed 14/02/2009.

⁴⁵See: <http://forums.secondlife.com/faq.php?>; accessed 12/02/2009.

⁴⁶See: <http://forums.secondlife.com/faq.php?>; accessed 14/02/2009.

⁴⁷See: <http://forums.secondlife.com/forumdisplay.php?f=56>; accessed 14/02/2009.

a self-defined community with its purposes and norms. Moreover, participants in these forums are to observe the *Second Life Forum General Guidelines*.⁴⁸ Activities such as flaming, spamming, trolling, reposing and advertising, are prohibited in all Second Life forums. Moreover, the *Basic Forum Policies and Etiquette* also advises residents to post in appropriate places, for appropriate reasons since the forums are split into separate topics.⁴⁹

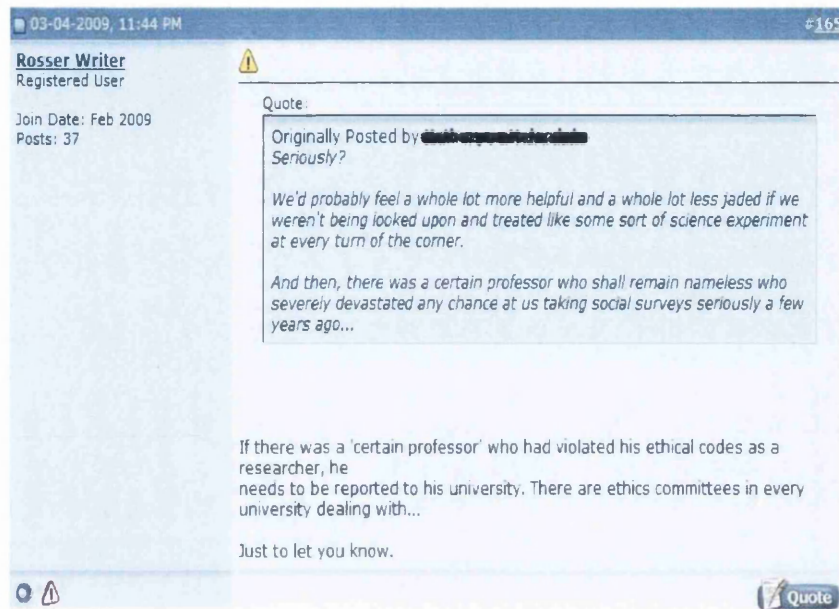


Figure 3.20: We do not welcome researchers.

Second Life forums are closely observed by moderators working for Linden Lab. The moderators have the right to remove posts and ban participants if they behave inappropriately. Therefore, both the researcher and the residents in the forum have to a certain extent, some protection. For example, if participants in Resident Answers consider carrying out this research in the forum to be inappropriate, they could report to the moderators and have the post removed. Nevertheless, if the participants in this forum react too negatively against the research avatar, the researcher could also seek assistance and support from the moderators. Moreover, Resident Answers have been used for research purposes prior to this posting and none of those posts are removed by the moderators. Although some residents have demonstrated a strong bias against researchers, others seem co-operative and helpful.

With all these in mind, it is important to choose a forum that allows general discussions about Second Life. The forum of Resident Answers belongs to the categories of 'Resident Conversation', which is a place for residents of Second Life to discuss issues that they consider relevant to their second lives and ask other residents for help on a variety of topics. Moreover, all Sec-

⁴⁸See: <http://forums.secondlife.com/faq.php?>; accessed 14/02/2009.

⁴⁹See: <http://forums.secondlife.com/faq.php?>; accessed 14/02/2009.

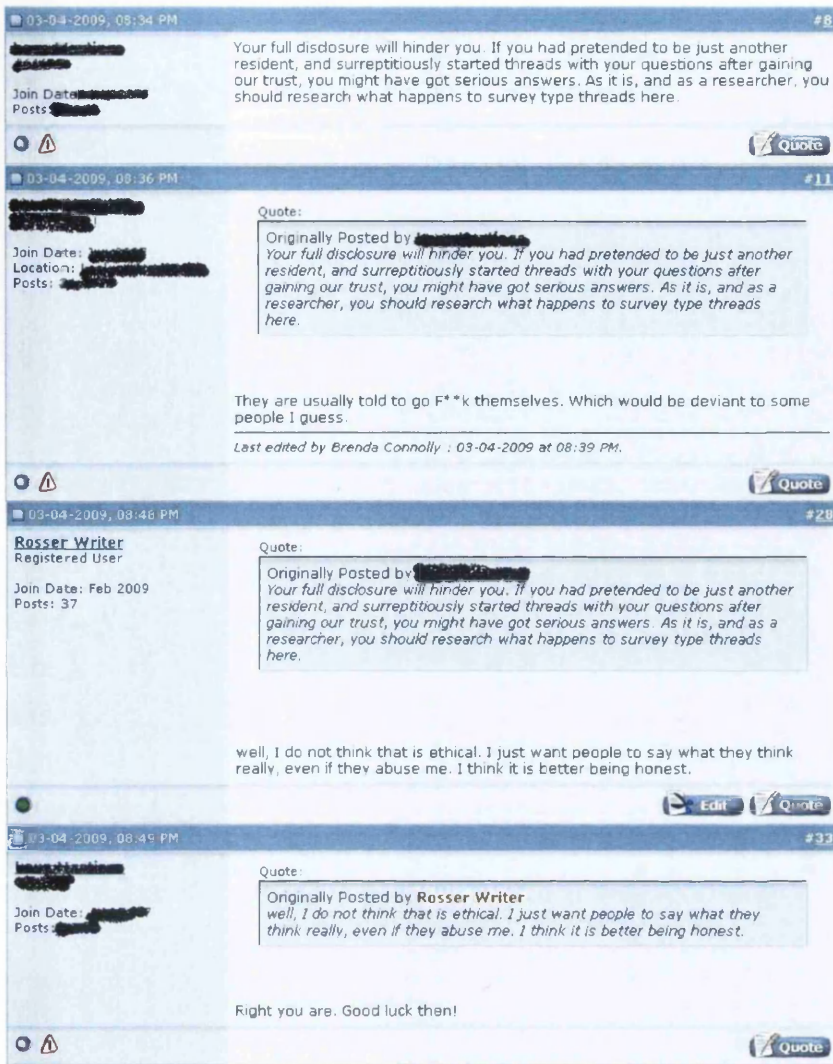


Figure 3.21: Why do not you pretend to be just another resident?

chance at” participants in Second Life “taking social surveys seriously a few years ago . . .” (see: figure 3.20).

Under such circumstances, some participants consider it is impossible for any researcher to get serious answers from the participants in the forum (see: figure 3.21). The researcher is advised to pretend to be “just another resident, and surreptitiously started threads with your questions after gaining your trust, you might have got serious answers” (see: figure 3.21). The ethics related to disclosure in Internet related research has been vigorously debated since the mid-1990s and continues to be an unresolved issue for researchers (Sanders 2005). Reid (1995) argues that if a researcher will not come to any harm by revealing his/her identity online, then he/she should.

However, the negative repercussions of revealing one’s professional identity and contact details can only be unknown in the mostly male-dominated, aggressive and anonymous

Initially, Rosser Writer isn’t at all welcomed by participants in Resident Answers. There is a very strong bias against researchers in the forum. Some participants feel they have been treated like “some sort of science experiment at every turn of the corner” due to the presence of researchers from various disciplines (see: figure 3.20). This antipathy against researchers might be partly caused by some badly executed research and badly behaved researchers in the cybercommunity Second Life, such as “a certain professor who shall remain nameless who severely devastated any

environment of cyberspace (Spender 1995). Moreover, the participants may make an automatic connection between deviance and sexual deviance. In this case, the researcher's gender and ethnicity may attract individuals who participate in Second Life for sex related purposes. The researcher certainly needs to stay away from these individuals. The extract below demonstrates how the word 'deviance' may be misinterpreted:

- “Yes, X’s survey was received well. It does not matter that she has a history here, but also the subject matter has something to do with it. Someone comes in on what seems to be a new account and starts questions of a more salacious nature, given past experience, it’s natural that it is going to wave the red flag in front of the bull” (see: figure 3.26).

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

Furthermore, the general distrust and bias that participants in Second Life have against researchers may be exacerbated, if the word criminology is mentioned. With all these in mind, the Departmental Ethics Committee decides that the researcher should reveal her identity as a male researcher carrying a piece of social science research for the School of Human Sciences, Swansea University. In response to the advice concerning disclosure, the researcher explains the reason behind the disclosure of Rosser Writer’s identity as a researcher and earns approval from the respondent (see: figure 3.21, bottom).

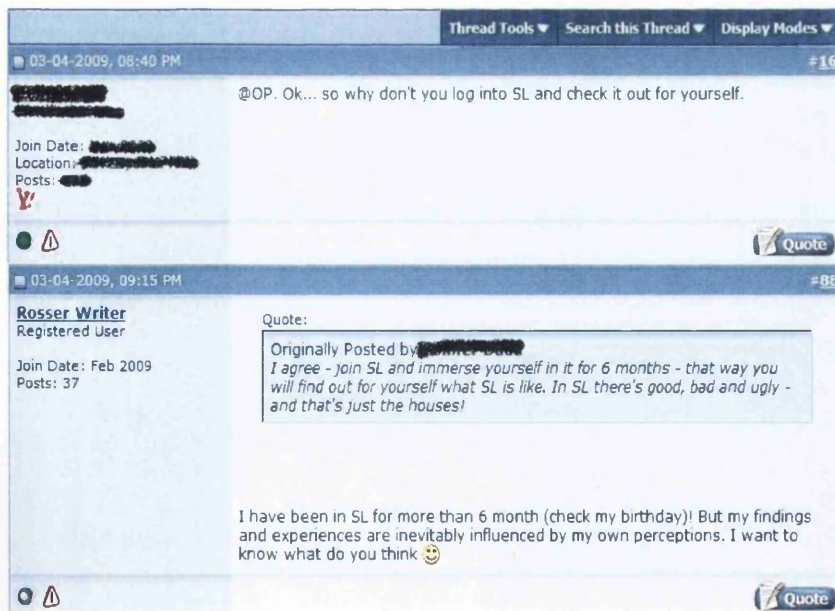


Figure 3.22: Why do not you immerse yourself in SL?

The research avatar used in participant observation is used again in this research, because this avatar is registered in July 2007. It is speculated that some participants would simply ignore the post and ask the researcher to “check it out for yourself” (see: figure 3.22). One of the respondents wrote: “I think people here are tired of data mining and

marketing surveys as well as cynical journalistic expose’s disguised as “research” projects. Being LL’s lab rats are one thing, but being prodded by people who seemingly have spent little or no time in SL is cause for offense for some people” (see: figure 3.26). Having an

avatar that has been in Second Life for more than a year would enable the researcher to respond to such a suggestion and earn more trust from participants in the forum (see: figure 3.22).

Besides the notion of disclosure, the notion of privacy is also problematic, because Resident Answers is accessible to all participants in Second Life. The forum is a public domain and those who post information would realise that it is available for other participants to read, copy and post onto other media. Although research has shown that people are more willing to reveal more about themselves online than in real life situations (Joinson 2005), some participants might not want to share their views with others for various reasons. For example, their actual opinion concerning deviance in Second Life may contradict their created identities in the forum. Taking this into consideration, an alternative is provided: participants in the forum are able to email their answers to the researcher at *RosserWriter@swansea.ac.uk*.

Moreover, some participants prefer to have discussions with the researcher in the privacy of their places in Second Life. The grounded theory approach employed in this research allows the researcher to be flexible in unforeseen situations. Follow this, the researcher teleports in-world and carries out three interviews (see: figure 3.24). Upon arriving in-world, Rosser Writer is immediately confronted by countless clown faces flying around him. These clown faces are accompanied by threatening music. For about a minute, the researcher has no control over Rosser Writer and any technological tools in Second Life. A minute later, the participant who asks the researcher to enter in-world, teleports Rosser Writer away from the place of his initial arrival and confirms that he is 'griefed' (in this case, griefed means harassed) (see: figure 3.23). Below a respondent gives an understanding of the term 'griefing':

- "All sorts of behaviour that could be seen as deviant are called griefing in Second Life. Deviants are called griefers. Griefing means deliberately disturbing, damaging or hampering someone else's experience of Second Life. It can mean harassment, insult or attacks with scripted weapons. Activities like deception, lying, theft and fraud are also considered against the social norms in SL. The same goes for invading someone's privacy".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 6, 2009)

The interviews are carried out rather smoothly. Interviewing in Second Life is a very convenient task with the support of technological tools available. Interview scripts can be automatically saved and stored in Rosser Writer's account. The interviews are carried out in the privacy of one of the interviewees' gallery (see: figure 3.24). One of the interviewees asks to observe as Rosser Writer interviews his friend. After that, he



Figure 3.23: Grieved

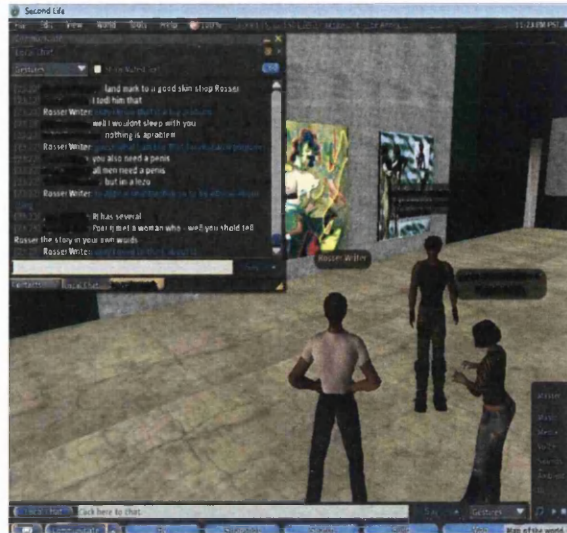


Figure 3.24: An interview

agrees to be interviewed as well. It is clear that the interviewees do not wish to engage in formal conversations with Rosser Writer about the research. They want to get to know Rosser Writer. They want to check his credentials. After the interviews, one of the interviewees may have given Rosser Writer a short character reference (see: figure 3.28).

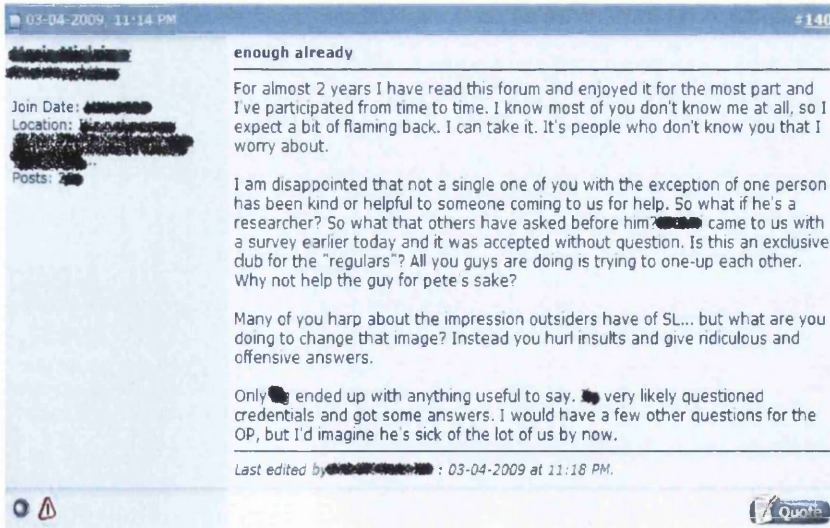


Figure 3.25: The researcher is “sick of the lot of us by now”.

answers. Only X ended up with anything useful to say. X very likely questioned credentials and got some answers. I would have a few other questions for the OP, but I’d imagine he’s sick of the lot of us by now” (see: figure 3.25).

This post gives the researcher an important piece of information — some participants are

After almost three hours (11:14 p.m., March 4, 2009) and 139 posts of scrutiny, hostility and irrelevance, the first post of support appears: “Many of you harp about the impression outsiders have of SL... but what are you doing to change that images? Instead you hurl insults and give ridiculous and offensive

offended by the way Second Life is perceived by the outsiders. These participants' perception of Second Life may be different from what is generally known by the outsiders. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the participants dislike researchers. Consequently, in order to collect data, the researcher needs to distinguish Rosser Writer from other researchers.

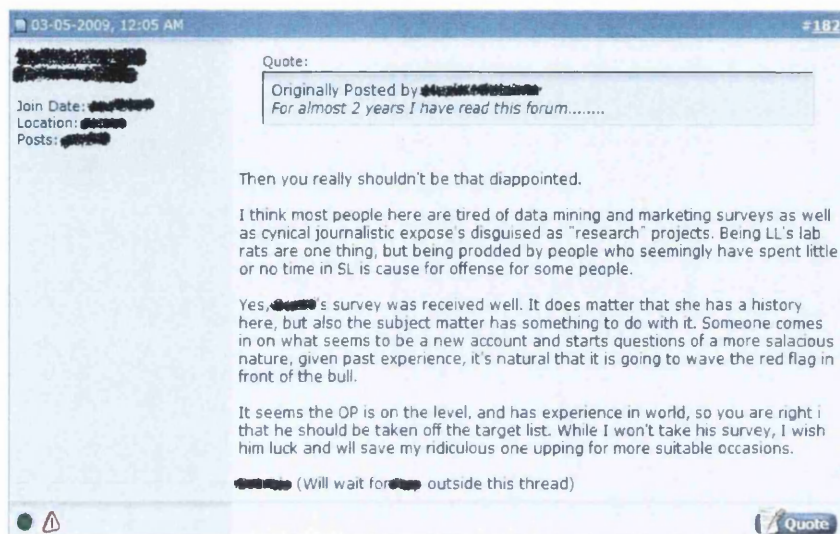


Figure 3.26: This researcher is “on the level”.

in world... he should be taken off the target list. While I won't take his survey, I wish him luck and will save my ridiculous one upping for more suitable occasions” (see: figure 3.26).

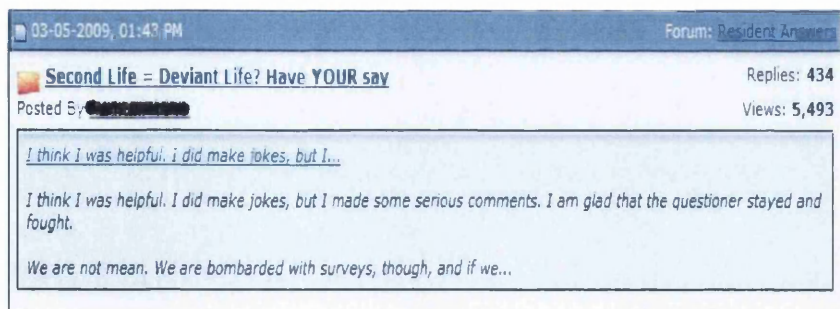


Figure 3.27: “Stayed and fought”

the questioner stayed and fought. we are not mean, we are bombarded with surveys, though, and if we... ” (see: figure 3.27).

A couple of hours later, another respondent offers support to the researcher. This respondent even gives Rosser a short character reference: “There was absolutely no need

To do so, the researcher stays in front of the computer constantly during the first 24 hours of the research and responds to various kinds of questions and scrutinies, concerning credibility, anonymity, research methods, etc. After almost 16 hours, a respondent wrote: “It seems the OP is on the level, and has experience

in world... he should be taken off the target list. While I won't take his survey, I wish him luck and will save my ridiculous one upping for more suitable occasions” (see: figure 3.26). It seems that the researcher's ‘continuous communication strategy’ works in the forum Resident Answers. Seventeen minutes after the research enters its 17th hour, a respondent wrote: “I am glad that the

for this feeding frenzy. It's embarrassing and will certainly impact anyone who opens the forum to see how we treat those who ask for a favour. In the end, I spoke to Rosser and found him an intelligent and pleasant person" (see: figure 3.28). Perhaps, this respondent is one of the interviewees. The research process suggests that trust between individuals in the Second Life forum is earned and sustained through continuous open communication.

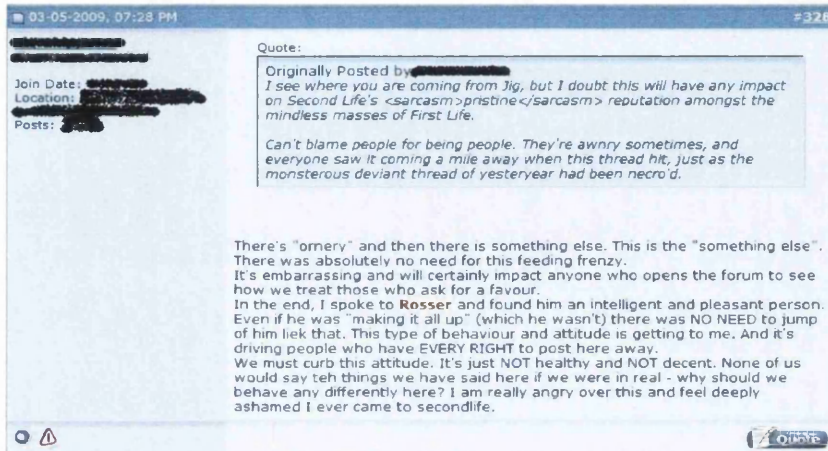


Figure 3.28: Rosser is an "intelligent and pleasant person".

of doing this is demonstrable warmth and openness" (Giddens 1990, p. 121). The relevance of Giddens' notion of trust to the understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life is discussed later.⁵⁰

Thread / Thread Starter	Last Post	Replies	Views	Forum
Second Life = Deviant Life? Have YOUR say (1 2 3 4 5 ... Last Page) Rosser Writer	03-08-2009 10:24 AM by [redacted]	434	5,484	Resident Answers

Figure 3.29: The total number of posts and viewers between 8:26 p.m., March 4, 2009 and 10:24 a.m., March 8, 2009 (see: figure 3.29). The thread can be considered as a long lasting one, since new posts are continuously added onto the front page of Resident Answers. Once this thread is no longer on the front

This coincides with Giddens' notion of trust. He wrote: "Trust on a personal level becomes a project, be to "worked at" by the parties involved, and demands the *opening out of the individual to the other*. Where it cannot be controlled by fixed normative codes, trust has to be *won*, and the means

By appearing warm, friendly and genuine, the researcher earns trust from some of the participants in the forum and gets some candid feedbacks. These feedbacks keep the thread alive for almost 86 hours, be-

⁵⁰See: Chapter Five, Section 5.3.2 (*The reflexivity of modernity and ontological insecurity*).

page, it can easily be overlooked by participants. During the 86 hours, the thread has been viewed 5,484 times and replied 434 times (see: figure 3.29). Out of the 434 posts, only 37 are from Rosser Writer. These 434 posts translate into 130 A4 pages.

However, the 130 A4 pages consist of pages after pages of insulting, aggressive and irrelevant exchanges. Many participants are far more interested in their own in jokes and role plays than answering the research questions.

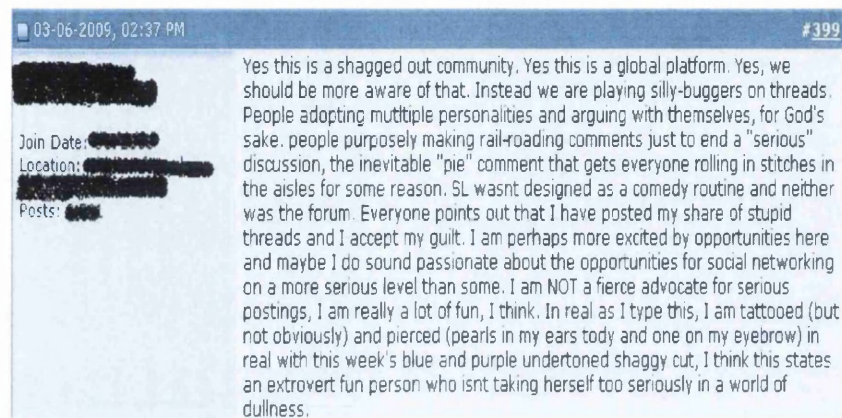


Figure 3.30: "Silly-buggers on thread"

guing with themselves, for God's sake. people purposely making rail-roading comments just to end a "serious" discussion, the inevitable "pie" comment that gets everyone rolling in stitches in the aisles for some reason. SL wasnt designed as a comedy routine and neither was the forum. Everyone points out that I have posted my share of stupid threads and I accept my guilt. I am perhaps more excited by opportunities here and maybe I do sound passionate about the opportunities for social networking on a more serious level than some" (see: figure 3.29).

A simple analogy between the forum Residential Answers and a pub may be able to explain the amount of messy texts. Having a textual exchange in the residential forum is like having a conversation in a pub. The conversation does not revolve around a main theme, instead it consists of various small talks, banters and in jokes. Moreover, when a group of individuals go to a pub together, they tend to have conversations in pairs but other individuals do join in, now and then. Most of the time, these who join in are not fully aware of the contents of the conversations. Sometimes, they say things that are totally irrelevant. This occurs, in much the same way, in the forum. Further more, just like conversations in a pub, textual exchanges in the forum can be aggressive, heated and sexually charged. Nevertheless, these textual exchanges do take a quiet and serious turn sometimes. Individuals tend to have short exchanges of serious conversation when

Eleven minutes after the research enters its 42nd hour, a respondent wrote: "Yes this is a shagged out community. Yes this is a global platform. Yes, we should be more aware of that. Instead we are playing silly-buggers on threads. People adopting multiple personalities and arguing with themselves, for God's sake. people purposely making rail-roading comments just to end a "serious" discussion, the inevitable "pie" comment that gets everyone rolling in stitches in the aisles for some reason. SL wasnt designed as a comedy routine and neither was the forum. Everyone points out that I have posted my share of stupid threads and I accept my guilt. I am perhaps more excited by opportunities here and maybe I do sound passionate about the opportunities for social networking on a more serious level than some. I am NOT a fierce advocate for serious postings, I am really a lot of fun, I think. In real as I type this, I am tattooed (but not obviously) and pierced (pearls in my ears today and one on my eyebrow) in real with this week's blue and purple undertoned shaggy cut, I think this states an extrovert fun person who isnt taking herself too seriously in a world of dullness."

they go to the bar for a new round of drinks and get out of the pub for a cigarette. Women tend to have some serious exchanges when they go to the washroom together. In this thread of textual exchanges, there are many quiet and serious moments. In the analysis of the huge amount of texts, the researcher needs to seize these quiet and serious moments. Indeed, extracting relevant information from random and messy data is a challenge. Nevertheless, during the analysis of these pages after pages of texts, many pieces of relevant information are drew out. Most of these pieces of relevant information are presented in the last chapter.⁵¹

3.2.4 Additional ethical considerations

The acceptable behaviour of Internet users is governed by the combination of three factors (cf. Williams 2003):

- The implications of certain real world laws, including national laws and international treaties.
- The Acceptable Use Politics (AUPs) of Internet Service Provides (ISPs).
- Informal codes of conduct known as netiquette developed by cybercommunities, as well as, both formal and informal codes of conduct in Second Life.

The ethical considerations of online participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a Second Life forum must take account of the codes of conduct relating to the practice of social science research, computer related laws and these codes of conduct relating to behaviour in the research field: Second Life.

The laws that are particularly relevant to conducting social science research are *The Data Protection Act 1998* and *The Computer Misuse Act 1990*. These laws address an individual's right to privacy and protection of personal information that they give to organisations. These organisations that store personal information on a computer need to have adequate security to protect the data. Although social science researchers doing CMC related research need to be aware of these laws, close observance to AUPs and netiquette would usually meet with these legal requirements.

In contrast to AUPs, although codes of conduct developed by cybercommunities, especially that of Second Life, are informal, they may be more relevant and important, especially on the subject of deviance in cybercommunities. This is because these informal codes of conduct are usually formed taking into consideration of established laws and AUPs drafted by the cybercommunities themselves. These codes of conduct, therefore,

⁵¹See: Chapter Five (*Understanding Deviance in Second Life*).

are generally acknowledged and understood by participants in these cybercommunities.

Although each cybercommunity has its own set of rules, these rules usually adhere to sets of codes developed and defended by organisations such as the Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR), the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). The IETF has produced the document RFC1855,⁵² providing a minimum set of netiquette guidelines, which allows organisations to take and adapt for their own use. These guidelines emphasise on the Internet being a global community, which consists of diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles. Therefore, users of the Internet should keep an open mind and be tolerant towards diversity.

3.3 Conclusion

Cybercommunities pose significant challenges to social science research. Although many cybercommunities, such as Second Life are created to replicate the real world, social life in these digital contexts is by its nature abstract. The abstract nature of cybercommunities, in this case Second Life, gives rise to many problems for the application of some established social science research methods. As discussed in this chapter, the methods used in this research are modified with regard to the unique characteristics of Second Life, such as the vastness of the research population (12,804,302 registered accounts on December 15, 2008; 11:00); the multiplicity of field sites (thousands of sub-cybercommunities); the anonymity of participants (self-created user names and 3D avatars); and the unpredictability of the response rate. However, not all unique characteristics in Second Life are problematic. Actually, the advanced computer technologies embedded in the system architecture of Second Life are very useful research tools. Indeed, social life in Second Life is digitally performed, therefore, it can be collected and preserved in its original form.

The literature on social science research in cybercommunities is very limited. It is, therefore, very difficult to predict possible outcomes that an action in Second Life may bring. Consequently, the researcher can only think of practical solutions when problems are encountered during her exploration of Second Life. The social science research methods of participant observation, questionnaire and discussion in a forum, are re-engineered befitting the social and technological characteristics of Second Life.

The flexibility and adaptability of the re-engineered grounded theory allows such an approach. More importantly, this re-engineered grounded theory approach — combining

⁵²See: <http://www.faqs.org/rfcs/rfc1855.html>; accessed 04/04/2007.

grounded theorising and adaptive theorising — fully realises the intimate relationship between theory and empirical work in this research, as well as, the reflexive nature of the subject matter, deviance in Second Life. Moreover, many insights and questions that have propelled the research forward are derived from Giddens' theories of modernity. Therefore, the development of the empirical research strategy from the abstract world of Giddens' theories of modernity is of methodological interests in its own right.

In the next chapter, the first stage of empirical work, participant observation, is presented. The substantial period of observation helps the researcher to gain an understanding of Second Life and formulate research methods for the subsequent two stages of empirical work. In particular, observation allows the researcher to identify four main social imperatives (norm, power, self-identity and conformity), which are used to facilitate the design of research tools⁵³ and guide the analysis of data⁵⁴ — fulfilling the intimate relationship between theory and empirical work in this research.

⁵³See: Section 3.1.2 (*The research process: adaptive theorising*).

⁵⁴See: Chapter Five (*Understanding Deviance in Second Life*).

Chapter 4

Observing Second Life: Structure, Community and Deviance

This chapter is built around a reflexive account of social interactions based on data gathered through the first stage of the empirical work — participant observation. The participant observation is designed to achieve a broad understanding of Second Life, including its inhabitants, activities, social characteristics and technological infrastructure, in order to locate some main research themes and sketch practical research methods for further empirical work. Special attention is paid to the various kinds of activities and methods of communication in Second Life. Through the process of observing and portraying Second Life, various research questions and methods emerge, aiding the development of later stages of empirical work.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is a basic account of Second Life based on experience obtained through the participant observation, as well as, other formal and informal sources, both online and offline. The second section is a basic account of issues that are associated with deviance in Second Life. These issues arise from four themes identified through observing Second Life, namely: *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity*.

4.1 Second Life: structure and community

Second Life is known as a 3D Internet-based cybercommunity developed by *Linden Research, Inc*, commonly known as *Linden Lab*. Anyone can become a resident of Second Life by downloading a client program named *Second Life Viewer*. Residents of Second Life interact with one another via 3D avatars. From the very beginning, the creator of the software, Philip Rosedale, wanted to create a virtual society, with a functioning and successful economy (Carr & Pond 2007). Rosedale said: “... as I got interested in

computers and computer networking, I was just struck by the thought that the ultimate thing you wanted to do with a computer was reconstruct the laws of physics as much as possible, and see whether you could simulate this, the real world. In an entrepreneurial way as well. I was always struck by the entrepreneurial possibility of such a place, that if you had a lot of computers that were simulating a place that people were in, things would be real there and that would mean you could have an economy and everything else”.¹

Rosedale declared that “I’m not building a game. I’m building a new country”.² Actually, the question as to whether cybercommunities, such as Second Life, should only be perceived as online games is fundamental to research on deviance in these contexts.³ For Curtis a cybercommunity “is not goal-oriented; it has no beginning or end, no ‘score’, and no notion of ‘winning’ or ‘success’... [such an online environment] isn’t really a game at all” (Curtis 1992, p. 122). Certainly, Second Life does not fit the standard definition of many off-line computer games and on-line virtual reality games. It is not a game programmed by game creators and played by game players. Following this, Second Life is not a game. Treating Second Life as a game would confuse online sociality with competition and entertainment, therefore, dismissing forms of intimacy, community and political economy in Second Life (Boellstorff 2008).

Moreover, unlike most virtual worlds, Linden Lab only creates the landscape and some core elements, such as *Orientation Island* and *Public Help Island*. Everything else is made by the residents. Actually, the residents have made Second Life into a user-defined world, in which they are able to explore, socialise, participate in individual and group activities, build and trade virtual properties. This section offers an account of Second Life, from three different aspects: ‘origin and development’, ‘people and community’ and ‘geography and governance’.

4.1.1 Origin and development

The origin of Second Life is a myth. In popular culture, it is perceived as one of the several cybercommunities (e.g., *There*, *Activeworlds* and *Red Light Center*) that have been inspired by the cyberpunk literary movement,⁴ in particular by Neal Stephenson’s

¹See: <http://www.netmag.co.uk/zine/discover-interview/philip-roseale>; accessed 27/07/2009.

²See: <http://www.wired.com/gaming/gamingreviews/news/2004/05/63363?currentPage=2>; accessed 18/12/2008.

³See: Chapter Two, Section 2.1 (*Cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity*).

⁴The cyberpunk literary movement is a literary movement of mainly American science fiction writers. This movement demonstrates how postmodern science and digital technology have influence on many current issues, such as self-identity, sexuality and gender, as well as, older structures of means, such as mythology (Cavallaro 2000).

(1992) novel *Snow Crash*. The following extract gives an example of how individuals in Second Life perceive the relationship between Second Life and the cyberpunk literary movement:

- “Second Life is exactly like the physical world, as described in the science fiction of Greg Egan, Charlie Stross, Vernor Vinge, John Ringo, Iain M. Banks, and other people who have depicted a society on the cusp of the technological singularity. Unfortunately, I don’t expect to live long enough to see that happen in this physical world, and I’m dubious about the possibility that this world is a Tiperian resimulation of the 21st century”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent March 4, 2009)

Within Second Life, it is rumoured that Andrew Linden (a Linden Lab developer) once said that Second Life was initially developed for research purposes.⁵ According to Andrew Linden, Linden Lab was started as a hardware company for the research and development of haptics.⁶ Linden World, the Alpha⁷ of Second Life, was built because Linden Lab needed a virtual world to simulate their hardware. Linden World started in March 2002, 15 months prior to the launch of Second Life in June 2003.⁸ A more mythic version suggests that the idea of Second Life came to Philip Rosedale (Philip Linden in Second Life) in a dream — in the form of continuous landscapes distributed across multiple servers.⁹ Perhaps, the idea of Second Life did start in a dream. It started in Philip Rosedale’s childhood: his dream of having a ‘magic machine’ that would let him build whatever he wanted, without worrying about real-world practical constraints. Rosedale said: “in general from when I was a kid. I was making electronics and programming computers from fifth, sixth grade really seriously. I was really into technology. I was pretty good with my hands and still am. We have a machine shop here and I just like making things. But I always thought the best place to invent would be inside the computer, if we could just get in there”.¹⁰ In his early thirties, Philip Linden decided

⁵See: http://secondlife.wikia.com/wiki/Second_Life.Through.The.Ages; accessed 09/8/2007.

⁶Haptics technology is the science of applying touch sensation and control to interaction with computer applications, e.g., touch screen.

⁷“Alpha in software and game development terminology refers to a period of time where the software is in very early stages of development. Alpha is closed to most members of “the public” and is only used by people within the company developing the software. Sometimes small groups of people close to the company may be invited to participate in alpha. Alpha can be used to determine the flow of the software, how things will work, and implementing early “back-bone” features. Second Life’s alpha was a bit unusual in that people who were interested in helping to develop the world could sign up for a program called “Early Creators”. The early creators were in large part not only testing how SL would work, but also building the world so it did not seem empty for other residents when beta began. These early creators could be considered some of the first “content developers” for SL. During SL’s alpha stages it was called Linden World” (see: <http://secondlife.wikia.com/wiki/Alpha>; accessed 24/08/2009).

⁸See: http://secondlife.wikia.com/wiki/Second_Life.Through.The.Ages#Alpha; accessed 24/08/2009.

⁹See: http://secondlife.wikia.com/wiki/Second_Life.Through.The.Ages; accessed 09/11/2007.

¹⁰See: <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20070201/hidi-rosedale.html>; accessed 27/07/2009.

to conquer the real world by replacing it with a virtual world where there is no barrier between thought and action (Guest 2007).

Initially, Second Life was designed to be a public park with minimum rules, in which people could build whatever they liked and become whoever they wanted. With that vision in mind, the initial creators developed the virtual physics, designed the interface, invented the basic rules covering ownership and hoped that a society would emerge. Four short years after Second Life's first launch to the public — on June 23, 2003 — a voluntarily and flexibly organised society has emerged.

At the time of observation — begun on July 20, 2007 — although Second Life had only been launched for four short years, technologies that support online communities started more than three decades ago. Almost all of these technologies are available in Second Life. Actually, throughout human history, technologies from the paper to the computer have shaped forms of selfhood and community. As discussed in Chapter Two,¹¹ Second Life is an extreme example of the intimate relationship between technology and society.

Email, the first and most frequently used communication tool on the Internet, was developed in 1972.¹² Early systems of email only allowed point to point communication: one person could send a message to one other person. A Listserver may be seen as an early form of cybercommunity: individuals need to sign up to be members of the Listserver to exchange emails. The invention of the program Listserver made one-to-many communication possible: a Listserver member could send a message to all members of the Listserver, then another member could choose to respond to the sender, or to the entire Listserver membership.

The first public Bulletin Board System (BBS) came to existence in 1978.¹³ A BBS is designed based on the metaphor of a physical bulletin board. In an online bulletin board, messages on the same topic are often associated with one another. The first message forms the beginning of what is called a thread and later responses are stacked beneath it. With the intention to soften the impact of dry texts and messages on the bulletin boards, the first emoticon — a smiley was made by using “-)” in 1979.¹⁴ In the 1980's and early 1990's, before the Internet was launched, BBS became a popular tool of communication between geographically dispersed users who accessed the BBS over telephone lines. Its popularity led to various more recent technological developments, such as search engines that enable users to search on topics, graphical emotions and self

¹¹See: Section 2.1 (*Cybercommunities as extreme products of modernity*).

¹²See: <http://www.nethistory.info/History%20of%20the%20Internet/email.html>; accessed 15/11/2007.

¹³See: <http://sysopscorner.thebbs.org/bbshist.html>; accessed 16/11/2007.

¹⁴See: <http://www.nerdtimes.com/emoticons/>; accessed 16/11/2007.

representations, private conversation spaces, links to email and user profiles, etc. Email and BBS are asynchronous communication technologies, which means that communication partners do not have to be present simultaneously, or co-present. Messages can be read and responded to, hours, weeks or months later.

In the late 1980s, synchronous online communication started to become popular. Chat systems and instant messaging systems are forms of synchronous communication system: correspondents must be co-present online. Typically, conversations are rapid and each individual's comments are short. In a busy synchronous communication system, messages scroll off the screen as they are replaced by more recent ones. In 1988, IRC (Internet Relay Chat) was developed out of chat system.¹⁵ Instant messaging systems were made famous by ICQ (I Seek You) and AOL (America Online).

On August 6, 1991, the World Wide Web (WWW) was released by CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research).¹⁶ This event facilitated the widespread use of websites and the development of online groups supported by web pages and various forms of communications software. Online communities appeared in a variety of media, which were gradually integrated into single environments. In the late 1990s, 3D graphical virtual communities such as *Palace* (www.palace.com) and later *Activeworlds* (www.activeworlds.com) started to appear. Highly sophisticated gaming worlds also emerged, e.g., *Doom*, *Quake* and *Everquest*. In these virtual worlds, residents represented themselves on the screen as graphical characters known as avatars, which can move through the worlds accompanied by sounds and messages. Various Internet associated technologies that could be applied in these virtual worlds, were developing rapidly during the late 1990s, such as internet telephone, video streaming, web cams, blogs and wikis.

Generally, the term Second Life refers to Second Life in-world virtual community. However, technically, Second Life is the multi-user online service provided by Linden Lab. This service includes the downloadable client software known as the *Linden Software* and the online environments that support the service, which include the accessibility of all technologies in the in-world community, as well as, the websites, residential forums and services available from the domain and subdomains of the official Second Life website.¹⁷ In short, the Second Life community is constituted by its in-world communities and its out-world services. In the cybercommunity Second Life, various computer technologies, such as email, instant messaging and BBS have been modified to fit the social characteristics of Second Life. During the participant observation, special attention has been

¹⁵See: <http://daniel.haxx.se/irchistory.html>; accessed 16/11/2007.

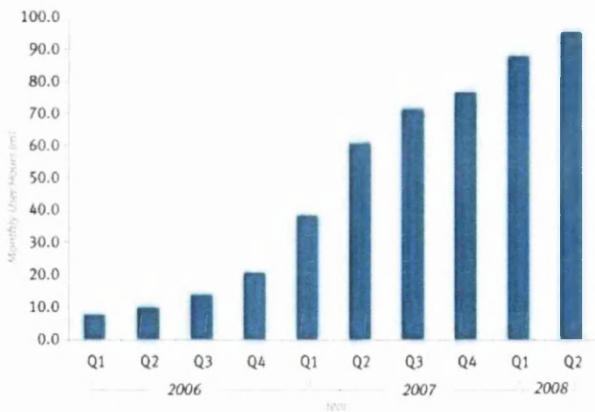
¹⁶See: <http://public.web.cern.ch/public/>; accessed 16/11/2007.

¹⁷See: <http://www.secondlife.com>; accessed 14/11/2007.

paid to these various technological tools of communication, with the intention to involve them in research methods for later stages of empirical work.

4.1.2 People and community

The growth of Second Life, is a notable social phenomenon. At the beginning of the observation — in July 2007 — according to its own report, Second Life had reached the 10 million residents mark and more than 10% of them had logged in during the past 60 days.¹⁸ At the time of analysing the questionnaire data — in October 2008 — Second Life has more than 15 million created accounts.¹⁹ However, the actual number of participants in Second Life has always been a controversy, because of the large amount of inactive accounts and multiple accounts.²⁰ According to the official economic statistics report of Second Life on October 13, 2008, there were 1,255,387 residents logged in Second Life in-world community during the last 60 days; 903,913 residents logged in during the last 30 days.²¹ On average, there were about 360,000 new users signing up monthly and around 510,000 monthly recurring users.²²



Moreover, the monthly user hours of Second Life had been increasing every quarter since the first quarter of 2006 (see: figure 4.1²³). In the first quarter of 2006, an average user only spent less than 10 mins in Second Life per month (see: figure 4.1). Twenty seven months later, in the second quarter of 2008, an average user spent more than 90 mins in Second Life per month (see: figure 4.1). These

Figure 4.1: Second Life monthly user hours figures reflect considerable amount of participation in the Second Life in-world community.

Perhaps, besides Second Life’s various other points of attraction, its large population may

¹⁸See: http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php; accessed 09/07/2007.

¹⁹See: http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php; accessed 13/10/2008.

²⁰See: 1. http://many.corante.com/archives/2006/12/12/second_life_what_are_the_real_numbers.php; accessed 10/10/2008;

2. <http://www.news.com/CountingtherealSecondLifepopulation/210010436146943.html>; accessed 10/10/08.

²¹See: http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php; accessed 13/10/2008.

²²See: <http://nwn.blogs.com/nwn/2008/09/monthly-users-o.html>; accessed 13/10/2008.

²³see: http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_graphs; accessed 13/10/2008.

be partly attributed to the ease of joining the cybercommunity. The official website²⁴ of Second Life provides all information a newcomer needs to enter the cybercommunity. At the time of observation, the registration page of Second Life displays a list of 13 large sub-communities that a newcomer could choose to join (the list changes periodically) (see: figure 3.13).²⁵ It also offers a newcomer the choice to click the *Skip This Step* tab and start Second Life on one of Linden Lab's *Orientation Islands*. Either one of the options demands the newcomer to enter (i) a first name between 2-31 characters and pick a last name from a long list of names (which changes periodically), (ii) his/her birthday (may not be real, but something easy to remember) to verify his/her account if he/she ever forgets his/her Second Life account or password, and (iii) his/her real email account for Second Life to send him/her a link to activate his/her Second Life account. A newcomer can give himself/herself any first name/last name combination that he/she likes, as long as, someone else has not already registered with the combination. In this case, a popular solution is to change the spelling of the first name to make it unique or pick another last name. There is always plenty to choose from the last name list. In Second Life, a resident's name appears in combination with an avatar. Hence, a newcomer has to consider the compatibility of his/her user name and avatar. Most of the residents are more careful while choosing their user names, because the names they choose are also their Second Life accounts. They need to use these accounts to access the in-world Second Life community, as well as, the out-world Second Life forums and blogs. Moreover, they can change their avatars as often as they want, but the only way to change their names is to open new accounts.

At the time of observation, every newcomer enters Second Life in one of 12 ready-made looks: six female, six male, ranging from the ordinary girl or boy next door, to very glamorous, to rather exotic improvised Japanese fashion, to alternative cybergoth and finally, to *Furry* (fox-like animal, see: figure 4.3). However, as soon as a newcomer enters Second Life, he/she is able to alter his/her appearance. Avatar creation is a matter of personal choice and role-play is an important part of this experience. An avatar can be male, female or gender-neutral. Gender has been a major focus of research on cybercommunities (e.g., Taylor 2006; Schaap 2002; Stone 1995; Turkle 1995; Curtis 1992; Rosenberg 1992). In theory, the transgendered body is the natural body in cyberspace (Stone 1995). However, in practice, resident profiles of many cybercommunities have revealed that male and female gender predominate cybercommunities (Rosenberg 1992). Besides male and female, about 10% to 15% of residents switch gender regularly (de Nood & Attema 2006). Moreover, some individuals embody themselves as transgendered (Roberts & Parks 1999).

²⁴See: <http://secondlife.com/>; accessed 09/07/2007.

²⁵See: <http://secure-web3.secondlife.com/join/>; accessed 09/07/2007.

Like an avatar, gender could be changed at anytime. There are two different forms of gender-switching, firstly, an avatar could switch gender anytime in Second Life and, secondly, an individual could participate in Second Life through an avatar of the opposite gender. The first form of gender-switching is observed during the participant observation: a female avatar suddenly becomes male within a matter of seconds, while having sex with another male avatar. The second form of gender-switching allows individual participants to “experience rather than merely observe what it feels like to be the opposite gender or to have no gender at all” (Turkle 1997, p. 152). However, even with such freedom of creation, most residents choose to stay true to their real life gender. There are 40.05% of female residents playing female, 41.95% of male residents playing male, 4.45% of male residents playing female and 3.55% female residents playing male (Rymaszewski et al. 2007, p. 76). Perhaps, it is partly because physical strength — one of the few advantages males have over females — becomes irrelevant in Second Life (Rymaszewski et al. 2007).

However, there is still difference in strength among those over 10 million avatars. Their strength is partly determined by their membership types. There are two membership types: *Basic membership* and *Premium membership*. A Basic membership allows a resident to enter Second Life completely free of charge. It entitles the resident to enjoy all kinds of activities in Second Life and its support services, except land ownership. Additional Basic membership accounts may be purchased at US\$9.95 each.²⁶ Since May 2006, a person could register for more than one basic account with different email addresses. Second Life has no verification process preventing this common practice.

Membership Plans			
Account Type:	First Basic	Additional Basic	Premium
Cost:	FREE!	\$9.95 ¹	Monthly: \$9.95/mo Quarterly: \$22.50 - in full (\$7.50/mo) Annual: \$72.00 - in full (\$6.00/mo)
Customizable Avatar:	✓	✓	✓
Signup Bonus:	L\$250 ^{2,3}	✗	L\$1000 ³
Weekly stipend:	✗ ⁴	✗ ⁴	L\$300/wk ⁴
Building Opportunities:	✓ ⁵	✓ ⁵	✓ ⁶
Land Ownership:	✗	✗	✓ ⁶
Support:	Basic ⁷	Basic ⁷	Premium ⁸

Figure 4.2: Accounts

A Premium membership allows land ownership and better technical support. The base rate of a premium account is US\$9.95 per month and further reductions are given when paid in an annual or a seasonal lump sum (see: figure 4.2).²⁷

Second Life is known for its diversity of population. In the cybercommunity, all creeds and colours are well represented.

However, race and ethnicity have received much less attention than gender in academic research on cybercommunities (e.g., Rodriguez 2003; Nakamura 2002; Kendall 2002; Bleecker 1994). Weheliye wrote: “while

²⁶See: <http://secondlife.com/whatis/plans.php>; accessed 09/11/2007.

²⁷See: <http://secondlife.com/whatis/plans.php>; accessed 09/11/2007.

gender and sexuality have been crucial to theories of both cyberspace and the posthuman, the absence of race is usually perfunctorily remarked and of little consequence to these analyses” (Weheliye 2002, p. 22). Nakamura (2002) provides a possible explanation of the lack of ethnic diversity in cybercommunities. She wrote: “People of color were functionally absent from the Internet at precisely that time when its discourse was acquiring its distinctive contours” (Nakamura 2002: xii). Only very few cybercommunities require choosing a race as one chooses a gender (Nakamura 2002). At the time of observation, all default avatars in Second Life appear to be white, but by controlling skin tone, hair, facial and other body features, it is possible for an avatar to appear to belong to a specific race. Residents who try ‘wearing’ nonwhite skins report racist responses, such as friends stop answering messages and receiving statements about nonwhite persons invading Second Life (Au 2006). Race and ethnicity may show up in more ways than skin colour. Many avatar names have ethnic connotations, including last names in Linden Lab’s name list, e.g., “Xia”, “Hoisin” and “Ituko”.

Second Life provides residents with 3D and ‘nth’ degree avatar creation tools, resulting in a physical diversity unmatched by any place on earth. However, despite the diversity of appearance, English remains the common language for the vast majority of Second Life residents. Certainly, there are sub-communities built by people from different parts of the world, such as the Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy, Korea, Japan, China, etc. In these sub-communities, residents tend to communicate in their native languages. To encourage communication among people from different parts of the world, Second Life provides its residents with a downloadable free BabelFish universal translator, which provides crude translations in 11 supported languages (English, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Japanese and Korean).



Figure 4.3: Two Furrries in Second Life

Current research demonstrates that rather than a human ethnic group, the Furry (see: figure 4.3) is the most well represented group of residents in Second Life (Rymaszewski et al. 2007). A Furry is an anthropomorphic animal character. The subculture of Furry could be traced back to a futuristic comic convention in 1980 when Steve Gallacci’s *Albedo* first featured over 150 humanoid versions of predominantly furry animals. Within the in-world environment of Second Life, there are several

levels of involvement in Furry lifestyle, which ranges from association, to textual role-play, to verbal roleplay via microphones. These activities take place in more than 10 Furry sims operated by Furnation — a website specialising in Furry content.²⁸

Other groups of people, such as writers, musicians, politicians, academics and business people enter Second Life to reach a new audience, or experiment with a synthetic universe, or have a taste of an innovative way of communication, or raise their profile and sell their product. Many of these famous people enjoy the privilege of keeping their real world surname if they choose to. For example, the realm of academia is represented by the cyberspace law expert — Lawrence Lessig, the man who first introduced and defined the term ‘virtual community’ — Howard Rheingold and the man whose novel has inspired the creation of Second Life — Neal Stephenson.



Figure 4.4: Anshe Chung

There are individuals who have gained their celebrity through their Second Life existence. Chief among these is Anshe Chung (real life name: Ailin Graef) — the creator and owner of one of the six continents — *Anshe Chung's Dreamland*. Anshe Chung joined Second Life in early 2004. In July 2006, she appeared on the front cover of ‘Business Week’ next to the headline *Virtual World, Real Money* (see: figure 4.4).²⁹ In November 2006, Anshe Chung declared herself Second Life's first millionaire in US dollars. Linden Lab estimates that Chung makes US\$150,000 per year from her in-world real estate business, with her real life and Second Life partner Guni Greenstein, through their company, *Anshe Chung Studios* (Rymaszewski et al. 2007). However, Anshe Chung is not only interested in making money, her goal is to help make the entry of real world corporations into Second Life as frictionless as possible.³⁰

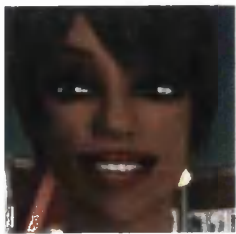


Figure 4.5: Brace Coral

Brace Coral (see: figure 4.5) is famous for her dedication in educating new residents of Second Life. She is the founder of *New Citizens Incorporated* (NCI), which consists of a group of veteran residents who are willing to assist newcomers. Brace Coral and her over 350 volunteers are active in many sub-communities, especial *Help Islands*, offering round-the clock classes in everything a newcomer needs to know (Rymaszewski et al. 2007).

²⁸See: <http://furnation.com/index.php?act=home>; accessed 14/11/2007.

²⁹See: http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_18/b3982009.htm; accessed 17/11/2007.

³⁰See: http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/06_18/b3982009.htm; accessed 17/11/2007.



Figure 4.6: Torley Linden

For many residents, Second Life provides them with a unique opportunity to overcome their real life disabilities. Torley Linden's (see: figure 4.6) real life Asperger's condition prevents her from perceiving and communicating emotions. However, in the virtual world where most communication is through text, her profound technical skills and willingness to help others have made her into one of the most influential and respected member of not only the Second Life community, but also Linden Lab³¹.



Figure 4.7: Jade Lily

Jade Lily (see: figure 4.7) saw the potential of Second Life as a tool for social change and non-profit fundraising only a few months after its launch to the public. She created the donation system for residents to sponsor her real life charity events, such as the *American Cancer Society's* annual relay for life in 2004.³² In 2006, combined with numerous support groups, Jade Lily's efforts raised over US\$40,000 (Rymaszewski et al. 2007).

Inspired by Jade Lily, various organisations, such as *Techsoup.org* — an nonprofit making technology provider; *Creative Commons* — provides flexible range of protections and freedoms for authors, artists and educators; and *Omidyar Network* — committed to creating opportunity for individuals to improve the quality of their lives, have created their own places in Second Life for charitable purposes.

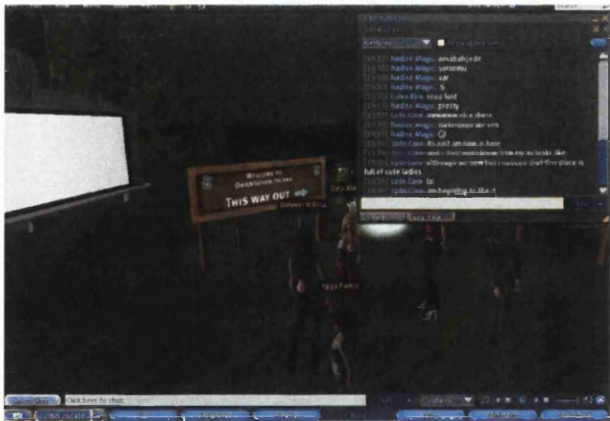


Figure 4.8: Orientation Island Public

Every Second Life celebrity starts his/her existence as a *newbie*. In general, a new resident starts his/her 'second life' in the *Orientation Island Public* (see: figure 4.8) — a training ground for other sub-communities in Second Life. Like all places in Second Life, an automated message is generated to welcome a newcomer upon his/her arrival. This automated message is a form of artificial life created by residents of Second Life to pro-

³¹See: http://secondlife.wikia.com/index.php/Torley_Linden; accessed 17/11/2007.

³²See: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/GI/content/GI_1_8_Second_Life_Relay.asp; accessed 17/11/2007.

vide newcomers with some basic introductions of the cybercommunity. All Orientation Islands have four stations: *Search*, *Move*, *Appearance* and *Communicate*. Each station is equipped with various facilities to teach newcomers different kinds of skills from talking, walking, running and flying, to addicting appearances, to searching for places to go.

Second Life supports both synchronous and asynchronous communication. Synchronous communication is equipped with computer software to display local conversations near an avatar in a *chat board* (see: figure 4.8, top right corner). Chat boards work in the same fashion as bulletin boards. Such an identification system is essential considering the rapid speed at which textual communications appear to erupt onto the screen. Even with such an identification system, an avatar would have to be directly involved in the conversation to see any sense in the huge amount of 'messy text'. Moreover, chat boards only represent one of the main methods of text-based communication in Second Life: *local chat*. Local chat is commonly used for public and localised conversations between two or more avatars. Conversations via local chat can be observed within 20 virtual meters. Besides synchronised communication like local chat, individuals may keep in touch via asynchronised communication using technologies available in Second Life, such as *instant message* (IM). IM is often used for private conversations, either between two avatars, or between the members of a group. IM communication is globalised in Second Life. It does not depend on the residents being within a certain distance of one another.



Figure 4.9: Friendship Card

A click on the *Contact* tab opens a panel with two tabs on the left. The *Friend* tab opens a panel listing all other Second Life residents that a resident has agreed to be friend with, by accepting their *Friendship Cards* (see: figure 4.9, top right corner). Residents of Second Life spend enormous amounts of time and energy in finding, making and maintaining friendship. In Second Life, friendships are usually made based on mutual interests rather than social gain. Perhaps, this form

of friendship may be seen as a type of pure relationship. Giddens wrote: "a friend is defined specifically as someone with whom one has a relationship unprompted by anything other than the rewards that relationship provides" (Giddens 1990, p. 90). The notion of friendship is discussed in more detail later.³³ Besides friendship, the role of Second

³³See: Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2 (*Time-space distanciation in Second Life*).

Life as a venue for love continues for most partners beyond the initial romance. Many residents are involved in relatively long term relationships in Second Life. Homosexual relationships are very much tolerated in Second Life, particularly because an avatar's real world gender is kept secret. Some residents who fall in love in Second Life, are married or are in committed relationships in the real world. The issue of infidelity raises questions about what kinds of human activity could threaten the gap between real and virtual:

- “The Real Life/Second Life divide has led to many complications. It is often used as a justification for people to ‘fall in love’ in Second Life despite being ‘happily married’ in first life. I believe they call it ‘SLove’. However, there are a number of problems with this. This first and foremost problem is that adultery is adultery no matter how you try to justify it. If you are married in Real Life and claim to be happily married, then there is no good reason why you should be chasing skirts in Second Life. Some people I have spoke to in this very situation say ‘But it’s just a game. It’s just fun’. My response to this is always ‘Would your wife agree with you?’. Since 99% of the time their wife/husband is not aware of these activities”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 6, 2009)

Upon meeting another resident, a resident could read the resident's *profile*. As described in Chapter Three,³⁴ a resident's profile is a window that could be accessed by other residents by clicking on the resident's avatar or using the *Search* tab to search for the resident by name. The profile window is composed of several tabs (pages). The tab, *2nd Life*, provides basic information, including the groups that the resident belongs to, and a box in which the resident could type up to 500 characters of information about himself. The tab, *1st Life*, provides 250 characters for the resident to talk about his/her real life self and post an image. The majority of residents in Second Life would leave this tab blank. The tab, *Interests*, allows the resident to identify what language he/she speaks and what he/she likes doing, such as building, exploring, meeting people, etc. The tab, *Picks* allows the resident to identify his/her favorite places or groups in Second Life. The *Group* tab opens a panel listing all Second Life groups that the resident has created and joined. The *Contact* application acts as a small administrative centre for common Second Life actions, e.g., sending IMs. These social structures resonate with Giddens' notion of *Place of phantasmagoric* — the pervasion of local relations by ‘empty’ space and time, making possible the emergence of reembedded social relations across indefinite spaces of time and space (Giddens 1990, p. 244).

The *Search* tab also allows a resident to look for existing Second Life groups to join (see: figure 4.10). It provides an easy way for a newcomer to get to know other residents

³⁴See: Section 3.2.2 (*Questionnaire: self-completion*).

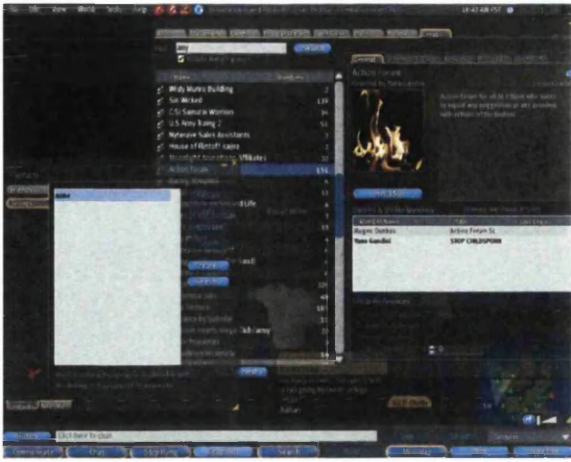


Figure 4.10: Search



Figure 4.11: Help Island Public

who have similar interests and agendas as himself. Joining a popular group may be the fastest way to meet up with, and get to know, many residents with similar interests simultaneously. The *Create* tab allows residents to create their own groups. Any two residents, regardless of membership type, can form a group. The resident who initiates the process of group creation would automatically become the group's founder and enjoys some privileges, including setting some basic rules and deleting other members. There are no restrictions on group size. A resident is allowed to take part in up to 25 different groups.

After learning a few basic skills in the *Orientation Island Public*, a newcomer should go to the *Help Island Public* (see: figure 4.11). In Help Island Public, a newcomer is able to visit the tutorial and demo areas; get a lot of freebies from the *Freebie Store*; and meet up with the mentors on duty in the arrival area and ask them whatever he/she wants to know about Second Life.

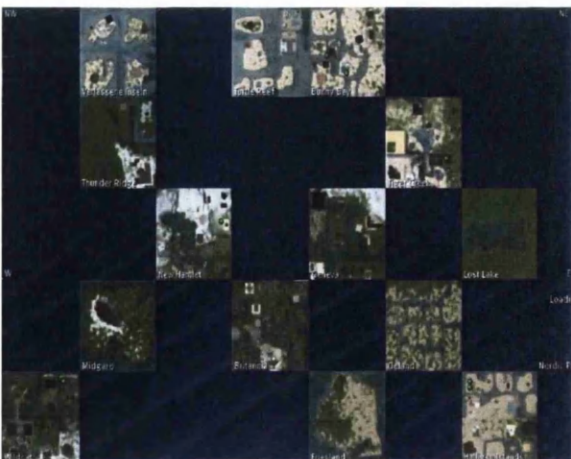


Figure 4.12: A less popular area

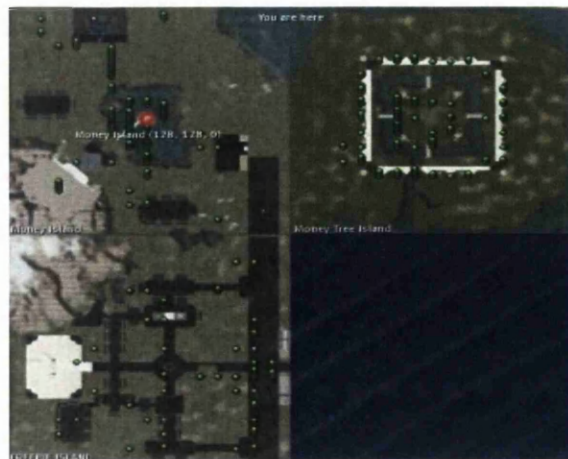


Figure 4.13: 3 popular sims

After Orientation Island and Help Island, a new resident should be ready to explore other places in Second Life. The population distribution in Second Life is very uneven. Many places, especially residential areas tend to have very limited participation. A new resident may be flying around a residential area for days and not encountering another resident. A less popular area made up by 14 sub-communities may only have less than 10 residents (as indicated by the green dots) (see: figure 4.12). Three popular sub-communities may have more than 200 residents at one time (see: figure 4.13). A new resident has to know where to meet people and the most efficient way is to check out places that other people are checking out.



Figure 4.14: Popular places

Before gambling was banned in Second Life, most of these popular places were places to gamble. At the time of observation, these popular places include places to make money, places to dance and socialise, places to improve appearance, places to relax and places to engage in sexual activities.

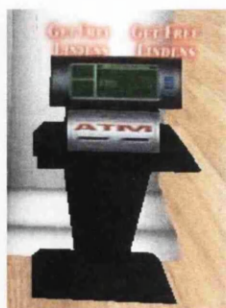


Figure 4.15: ATM

There are also places to make money by doing surveys, e.g., *Money Island* and *Money Tree Island*. The completion of each survey would generate L\$40 to L\$1,500 depending on the types of survey. Firstly, a resident has to click on an ATM (see: figure 4.15) machine in Money Island or a Money Tree in Money Tree Island. The resident then click on the *Go to Page* tab, when a blue window pops up on the screen. After being directed to the page, the resident could click on any survey listed on the web page and fill it out. Once a survey has been completed, the resident would receive free L\$. This method of survey research was considered, but could not be carried out in this research, because of the lack of a financial source and the problem of an unpredictable sample size.

FREEBE ISLAND is a good place to go and pick up free stuff, such as skins, hairs,

eyes, clothes, furniture, bags, shoes, jewels, scripts, etc. All these freebies can be put in a resident's *Inventory*. Every resident in Second Life has two folders in his/her tool bar, namely, *Inventory* and *Library*, both of them are tool boxes for avatar creation and building. The *Library* is the resident's starting *Inventory*. All items in the *Library* are provided by Linden Lab. The *Library* is shared by all residents in Second Life. Items in the *Library* include two little houses, a wide range of landscaping terms, a few different clothing items and hair styles, a firework launcher, 3 useful scripts of animation, etc. The *Inventory* is private, it allows residents to store their creations and freebies that they have obtained from places such as the FREEBIE ISLAND.

Through 3D animations, avatars could engage in a wide range of sexual practices, from embracing and kissing to oral, vaginal and anal sex. Although the default embodiment for avatars do not include genitalia, many forms of genitalia are created and sold by residents. Residents also create and trade beds, bondage devices and whole landscapes for sexual encounters. Sex in Second Life is not always private, especially in environments dedicated to sexual themes. During the observation, many 'BDSM' (bondage/discipline, domination, submission/sadism and masochism) sub-communities are accidentally encountered. There are also some highly controversial forms of sexuality, such as *child play*: child avatars having sex with adult avatars. Although the main grid of Second Life is restricted to adults, anyone could register with a false birthday.

In Second Life, many places are dedicated to homosexual communities or have homosexual subcultures within them. Since sexual orientation is not apparent in the way that gender and race are, the sexual orientation of a resident is often unclear. Actually, homosexuality has been a feature of cybercommunities from their inception, partly because of non-normative sexualities remain stigmatised, if not illegal, in much of the real world. However, despite a long tradition of cyber libertarian tolerance, homophobia related acts, such as homophobic hate speech is far from unknown in cybercommunities (Glover 2007).

Building is a very important feature of Second Life, since the cybercommunity is practically built by the its residences. The *Sandboxes* provide those who are landless with a place to build various items from houses to vehicles, get building tips and meet new friends. Taught courses in Second Life include scripting, building, texturing and land management. *Natoma* is a place to learn how to build in a self-guided and self-paced fashion. Residents are able to have comprehensive tutorials in the *Ivory Tower Library of Primitives* in *Natoma*. Although the tutorials appear to be clear and concise, it is still very time-consuming to learn how to build and to actually build in Second Life. Although Linden Lab allows residents to build what they want, it does provide a few well-

built sub-communities to represent the company's version of a welcoming environment. For example, a perfect American suburban retreat is achieved by 3 sub-communities of *Boardman*, *Blumfield* and *Brown*.

A new resident also needs to be aware of different social norms at work in Second Life. Some of these norms are specific to particular subcultures or sub-communities, whereas others are universalised. For example, it is polite to stand up before teleporting away to give other residents nearby a visual cue of one's immanent departure. Norms around social proxemics³⁵ drew upon cultural conventions from the real world are widely shared in Second Life, e.g., the appropriate distance to stand to another avatar while having a conversation. As a newbie spends more time in Second Life, his/her newbie status would fade away and he/she would become a resident, participant or even *midbie*. The status of a midbie is shaped not just by the absolute amount of time since the creation of an account, but by the cumulative amount of time spent in-world. A resident whose account is four years old, but has been in-world just an hour a week, would usually be seen as more of a newbie than another resident who acquired an account only a year ago, but has spent 10 hours a week in Second Life. The amount of time a resident has spent in Second Life is not visible on his/her profile. This is a matter of judgment, based on the apparent expertises and social networks of the resident. For most residents, social networking is important to their 'second lives'. Common signs showing that a resident is no longer a newbie are relationships with other residents and involvement with the cybercommunity Second Life. An experienced resident who is involved with Second Life would have acquired friends, partners and built a home for himself.



Figure 4.16: Exchange Rate

The currency of Second Life is the Linden Dollar (L\$). Linden Dollars can be purchased with US Dollars and traded back into US Dollars through the *LindeX exchange*, which is a system that puts sellers in touch with buyers. At the time of observation, the exchange rate is L\$1000 to US\$4.08 (November 2007) (see: figure 4.16). All residents are able to buy L\$ via the *Buy L\$* tool, which can be found in the *World* tab. However, there are many places in which residents are able to make

money buy answering surveys, sitting on camping chairs, dancing in club, trading com-

³⁵The measurable distance between individuals as they interact (Hall 1963).

modities, etc. Moreover, residents with computer programming skills could use the *Linden Scripting Language* to craft a range of devices, such as intruder warning systems that notifies owners of visitors to their property. Having a job in Second Life may blur the boundary between the virtual and actual, since the Linden Dollar can be exchanged into real world currency.

The result of real-world tradability is that many enterprising residents have set up real businesses in Second Life. These businesses range from teenagers creating their own clothing labels and skateboard shops, to hardcore entrepreneurs selling real estate, space-ships and even sex. There are also lots of real-world companies making money in Second Life and Second Life business ventures making money in the real world. The most popular economic activity in Second Life is the buying and selling of land. At the time of observation, Linden Lab allows Premium account holders to own up to 512 virtual square meters of land without additional fees. The price of land may differ significantly in areas that are managed by private management groups. These private management groups have the authority to take back land that has been paid for, and Linden lab has no authority to intervene. Residents of Second Life can bid on pieces of land. Land auctions take place in many different locations and at various different times.

The first real world commercial company *River Run Red* made its appearance in Second Life through a land action in 2004. As the highest bidder of *Avalon*, the owner of River Run Red has the sole renting rights and ultimate power to do whatever he wants in the entire island of Avalon. Currently, the company's activities in Avalon include promoting books, movies, organising virtual concerns and selling shoes. Since then, the legal trading of L\$ has stimulated the in-world participation of many real world companies and organisations, such as Adidas and IBM.

In May 2007, the Maldives became the first country to open an embassy in Second Life.³⁶ In January 2007, the Swedish Institute declared its interest in setting up an Embassy in Second Life.³⁷ However, the Embassy would not issue passports and visas, it would only be a place informing users how to get them in the real world and providing information about Sweden. Moreover, at the time of observation, Second Life has sold more than 100 sims to universities and other educational organisations, including Princeton University (US), Harvard University (US), University of Derby (UK), the Open University (UK), etc.³⁸

³⁶See: <http://news.sawf.org/Lifestyle/37525.aspx>; accessed 19/11/2007.

³⁷See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6310915.stm>; accessed 19/11/2007.

³⁸See: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/07/education/edlife/07innovation.html>; accessed 19/11/2007.

4.1.3 Geography and governance

Given the ease with which residents are able to ‘teleport’ around Second Life in a matter of seconds, it might be a bit absurd to talk about geography in Second Life. The globalising nature of modernity (Giddens 1990) seems to make place irrelevant in Second Life. Giddens wrote: “The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between “absent others” locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction” (Giddens 1990, p. 18). For example, Internet related technologies, such as Skype is able to foster face-to-face interactions between individuals of distant locales. Perhaps, partly because of this reason, the Internet is often referred to as cyberspace. However, the creation of 3D cybercommunities has brought about a shift from space back to place (Boellstorff 2008). For example, in Second Life, place is relevant in new ways. Actually, research has demonstrated the salience of place and sensory experience in cybercommunities (e.g., Reed 2005; Hillis 1999; Markham 1998; Morse 1998; Poster 1996).



Figure 4.17: Mini Map

In Second Life, place is the central role of vision (Boellstorff 2008). Unlike 2D cybercommunities, a defining characteristic of 3D cybercommunities is — it is a place in which one can look and walk around. Actually, “The roots of yearning for a virtual world are partly anchored by an ongoing Western belief in the eye as the most noble organ, and in vision as a sensual metaphor for extending understanding” (Hillis 1999, p. 37). Being able to

observe one’s avatar in a 3D place-based environment may facilitate better social immersion and self embodiment. Second Life is equipped with *Mini-maps* for residents to locate themselves and people around them (see: figure 4.17).

Prior to the version 1.8 upgrade (since December 2005) *telehubs* were used rather than point-to-point teleportation. Telehubs recreated a feature of real world physicality in Second Life — the idea that it takes time to travel to another place (Williams 1996). At that time, if a resident wanted to be teleported to a particular location, he/she would appear at the nearest telehub — a location that usually looked like a bus stop or kiosk. After that, he/she would have to fly to his/her destination from the telehub.

Giddens wrote: “ “Place” is best conceptualised by means of the idea of locale, which refers to the physical settings of social activity as situated geographically” (Giddens 1990, p. 18). In Second Life, vision and place are also linked through the idea of landscape. The geographic space of Second Life may be viewed an ever-changing archipelago. At the time of observation, it consists of open sea and a mainland of several continents, which is surrounded by thousands of islands. Most of these islands are very small. There are six large landmasses, called continents. In order to locate these continents, it helps to think of the entire archipelago as a rectangular map. The largest and oldest continent, the *Northern Continent* is located in the middle of the map. It is a single unit formed by two separated landmasses. Compared with other regions, the *Northern Continent* is characterised by the widest variation in types of environments. The second large landmass is called the *Southern Continent*. It is characterised by a large interior area with very little water body. Although the *Southern Continent* has no official zoning, it has developed into distinct areas, either more residential or more commercial. In the East of the map, there are two newly developed continents. The one to the South is called *Corsica*, which has a large interior area. The one to the North is called *Nautilus*, which is almost completely in coast line with very little interior area. In between the Northern Continent and the Southern Continent, there is a developing area called *Azure Islands*. It is owned and maintained by the Azure management group not Linden Lab. The last region, Anshe Chung’s Dreamland is located at the very Northern edge of the map.

Each of the six large continents is made up by various regions — the smallest unit of community in Second Life. Residents often refer to regions as *sims*, which is short for simulators. This is because at the early stage of Second Life’s technical development, a simulator held a region. An online source states that by September 2006, Second Life had more than 3,000 servers at a data centre in San Francisco.³⁹ Every server hosted 4 simulators and every simulator held 2 sims. At that time, there were at least 24,000 sims in Second Life. These 24,000 sims formed the Northern Continent, the Southern Continent and various small islands. Azure Island and Anshe Chung’s Dreamland were at their very initial stage of development. Nautilus and Corsica were not developed at all. There is no official information revealing the number of sims in Second Life at this moment. However, it is known that Nautilus has more than 740 sims and Corsica is about the same size.⁴⁰ Azure Islands has more 300 sims⁴¹ and Anshe Chung’s Dreamland has more than 250 sims.⁴²

³⁹See: <http://ispaces.ec3.at/SL/space/SecondLife+Folien/EC3-SL.pdf>; accessed 14/11/2007.

⁴⁰See: <http://www.secondlifeinsider.com/2007/07/07/nautilus-continent-nearly-complete-corsica-coming-soon/>; accessed 11/11/2007.

⁴¹See: <http://www.azureislands.com/zoning.php>; accessed 14/11/2007.

⁴²See: <http://dreamland.anshechung.com/>; accessed 11/11/2007.

In Second Life, each sim is both a geographical and administrative unit. It is governed by rules and regulations that may change from sim to sim. The entire Second Life is divided into areas that can include any number of sims, governed by a given set of rules. For instance, a separated area called *Teen Grid* is reserved for members between the ages of 13 and 17 to join Teen Second Life, without entering false information to participate in the main grid of Second Life. New voluntary identity or age validation measures have been proposed to secure the distinctions between *PG* and *M* ('parental guidance' and 'mature') sims on the main grid, ensuring that only validated adults can enter areas marked as containing adult material.

Linden Lab's role in governing Second Life is a controversial topic.⁴³ This is partly caused by a tension between the transformative capacities that technology seems to promise and the countervailing distrust that digital society would simply replicate of-line social or political processes (Malaby 2006b). Fundamental questions about the governance of any cyber environment would automatically apply in Second Life, such as access, openness and control (e.g., Ludlow & Wallance 2007; Lessig 2006 & 1999; Kelty 2005; Lovink 2002).

In contrast to the initial design of "a public park with minimum rules" (Guest 2007, p. 73), Second Life has come to be governed by different forms of constitutional, proximal (online) and technological justice processes. This multiform justice process at work in Second Life may be seen as an example of a shift from *sovereignty* to *governmentality*, which is a by-product of the rise of the modern nation-state. For Foucault sovereignty "possesses its own intrinsic instruments in the shape of its laws", whereas governmentality "resides in the things it manages... the instruments of government, instead of being laws, now come to a range of multiform tactics" (Foucault 1991, p. 95). Modern governmentality is often associated with treating a population as infinitely knowable and improvable, e.g., the inventions of mass education and public health services. Some episodes of extremely consolidated use of political power, such the rise of fascism, the Holocaust and Stalinism have displayed a totalitarian possibility that is contained within the institutional dimensions of modernity (Giddens 1990).

In a cybercommunity constructed by advanced computer software, such as Second Life, techniques of controlling residents could potentially be augmented to an unprecedented degree. Coincidentally, the origins of 'cyber' lie in the Greek *kubernetes*, which is also the root of the word 'govern'. Moreover, the word 'cyber' first entered the English language in 'cybernetics' — the study of systems of control and communications. Indeed,

⁴³See: http://news.cnet.com/Whogovernsvirtualworlds/2100-1043_3-6140249.html; accessed 12/01/2009.

Linden Lab may be seen as having a total control over Second Life. A resident is able to keep his/her actual life identity as a secret, since anyone could register for an account anonymously. However, there is potentially no privacy for an avatar in Second Life, since computers are designed to record and store information. Actually, every item in Second Life is referred to as an *assert*. All asserts are stored in the database of Isilon Systems, Inc. — a global company physically headquartered in Seattle, USA. Isilon Systems designs and sells storage systems and software for digital content and other unstructured data,⁴⁴ including information written on notecards and IMs, avatar shapes and appearances, Linden Scripting Language (LSL) scripts, digitised audio clips, the design of every building, etc.⁴⁵ On December 13, 2007, Philip Rosedale said: “People in Second Life have created over 1 billion in-world “objects” occupying total storage space of about 100 terabytes” (a terabyte is equal to 1,000 gigabytes).⁴⁶

All residents in Second Life have to sign the *Terms of Service* when acquiring their accounts. The Terms of Service is a private contract between Linden Lab and individual residents in Second Life. It explains Linden Lab’s obligations to residents, as well as, residents’ obligations to Second Life. All areas in Second Life, including the www.secondlife.com website and the Second Life forums, adhere to the same *Community Standards*. Locations within Second Life are noted as *Safe* or *Unsafe* and rated M or PG, and behaviour must conform to the local ratings. Any unrated area of Second Life should be considered as PG. Besides globalised rules that apply to everyone, there are localised regulations that are applicable within specific areas, especially sims that are managed by large management groups.

All residents in Second Life, including its in-world and out-world environments, have to observe the Community Standards, which sets out six kinds of major ‘crime’ in Second Life, known as the *Big Six*. These six kinds of major ‘crime’ are:

1. Intolerance
2. Harassment
3. Assault

⁴⁴See: <http://www.isilon.com>; accessed 24/08/2009.

⁴⁵On February 26, 2007, Isilon Systems announced: “10 new additions to its growing community of customers who are driving innovation in the emerging world of Web 2.0 content and services. Linden Lab (creator of the Second Life 3D virtual world), Current TV, Dailymotion, FlipClip, Imeem, Jump TV, Pandora TV, PhotoBox, Revver and Skyrock are the latest companies to select Isilon IQ clustered storage as the core technology for access and storage of the ever-expanding user-created digital content assets that are a hallmark of the next generation of Internet interactivity” (see: <http://www.isilon.com/company/?sub=press&page=press&release=114>; accessed 24/08/2009).

⁴⁶See: <http://freakonomics.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/12/13/philip-roosedale-answers-your-second-life-questions>; accessed 24/08/2009.

4. Disclosure
5. Indecency
6. Disturbing the peace⁴⁷

Residents are encouraged to protect themselves and their experiences in Second Life by reporting violations of the Community Standards (see: Appendix 15) using the *Abuse Reporter* application (see: figure 4.18), which is located under the *Help* menu in the in-world tool bar. Linden Lab promises to investigate every Abuse Report individually and keep the identity of the reporter strictly confidential. Transgressors of the Big Six may be warned, suspended or even permanently banished from Second Life by Linden Lab. However, it may take days or weeks for Linden Lab staff to react. For more serious offences, such as attempting to crash the Second Life grid or gain real world life information about another avatar, e.g., credit card numbers, Linden Lab staff would seek support from real world justice processes. However, if the accused lives outside the United States, law enforcement could potentially be very difficult. The reporter would receive an email informing him/her of the resolution when it occurs. The *Second Life Community Incident Report*⁴⁸ displays the 25 most recent disciplinary actions taken by the Linden Lab.

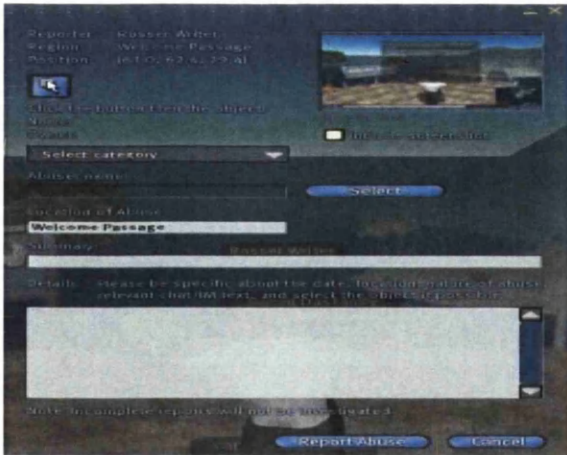


Figure 4.18: Abuse Reporter

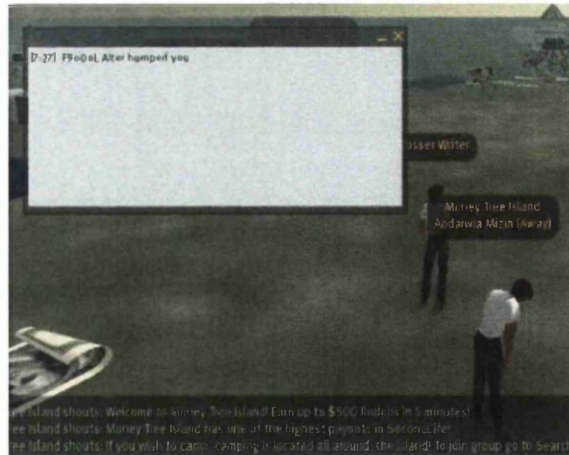


Figure 4.19: Bump, Push & Hit Report

The tool bar also has a *Bumps, Pushes & Hits* application, which automatically detects and records all incidences where other avatars bump, push and hit one's avatar (see: figure 4.19). Linden Lab acts with absolute authority when deciding which Abuse Report to act upon, as well as, the appropriate punishment to be carried out. There

⁴⁷See: <http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php>; accessed 14/01/2008.

⁴⁸See: <http://secondlife.com/community/blotter.php>; accessed 14/01/2008.

is no any other form of governing body to review decisions made by Linden Lab. This form of governance could potentially be accused of being a virtual dictatorship (Doctorow 2007). However, in practice, a virtual dictatorship is impossible in Second Life due to its rapid growth and heavy dependence on user creativity. New lands and social formations are added so quickly that the landscape of Second Life is changing on an hourly basis. Moreover, most of the contents are created by the users, making it impossible for Linden Lab to keep up. Philip Rosedale suggests that at some point in 2005, Second Life passed an 'event horizon', after that it became an unknowable entity even to Linden Lab (Wallace 2006). Moreover, in order not to appear dictatorial, Linden Lab staff would hesitate to act against residents unless a clear violation of the Terms of Service is documented. Hence, instead of dictatorship, Linden Lab's user-content model of community building has driven its governmentality towards the implicit (Malaby 2006a). Actually, much of Linden Lab's governance operates at the level of setting norms, rather than managing daily interactions (Boellstorff 2008).

There are many groups in Second Life. Some of these groups own a huge amount of lands and set their local rules. For example, the management group of Azure Island asks all residents and guests not to harass others, have over aggressive security systems and create scripts or objects that impact on the servers negatively.⁴⁹ The management group of Azure Island separates its islands into three different zones: residential, commercial and protected. Each of these zones has a unique set of rules and building regulations. The residential zone is strictly regulated, whereas the commercial zone is often granted the freedom of 'anything goes'. The protected zone is characterised by huge open grounds for all Second Life residents to use. It is often used to separate residential and commercial zones.

Many private houses in Second Life have very effective security systems in the forms of visible and invisible electronic fences (see: figure 4.20 & figure 4.21). An avatar is not allowed to walk into, or even fly over, other avatars' private houses. It is rather difficult to overcome these security systems. To do so, one has to override these security systems, which involves hacking into, then altering the original scripts of these systems. These technological systems of social control in Second Life exemplify contemporary construction of digitised sanctuaries within the new forms of urban space, such as the gated communities. The gated communities are controlled by forms of electronic surveillance, e.g., CCTV cameras (Armstrong & McAra 2006).

⁴⁹<http://www.azureislands.com/zoning.php>; accessed 13/09/2007.



Figure 4.20: Access denied

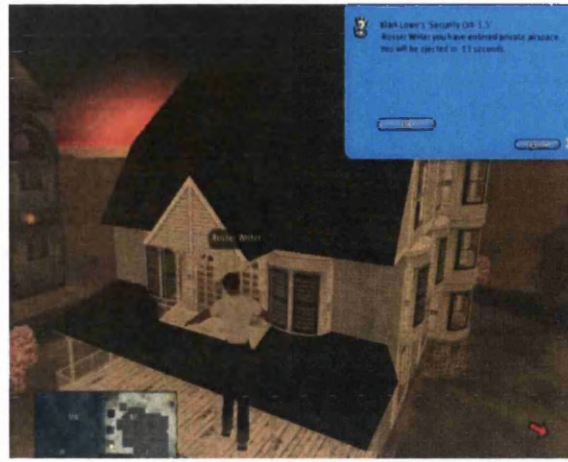


Figure 4.21: Ejected

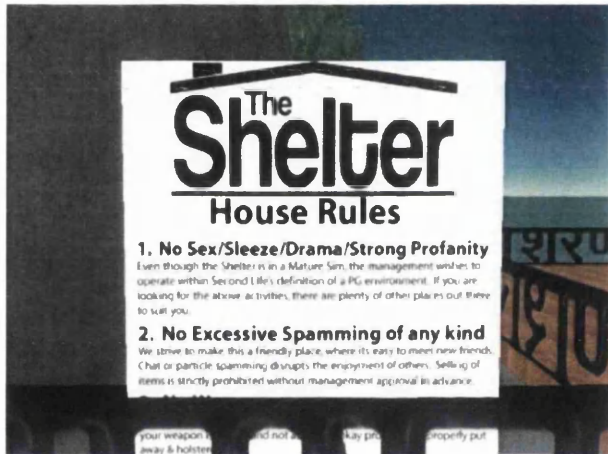


Figure 4.22: The Shelter House Rules

Besides global and community rules, each sim, and even areas within a sim, may have its unique rules and regulations. For example, the community *Shelter* has its *The Shelter House Rules*. Although the Shelter is located in a mature sim, the management would like to operate it within Second Life's definition of a PG environment. In particular, the Shelter management prohibits sexual activities, excessive spamming and selling of items (see: figure 4.22).

4.2 Second Life: emerging main themes for the analysis of deviance

Four main themes emerge through the participant observation and the reflexive account of this experience: *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity*. It needs to be emphasised that in accordance with adaptive theorising, the four themes emerge reflexively rather than automatically in relation to empirical data collected during the participant observation. This means that the theoretical frameworks⁵⁰ that are constructed with the aid of Giddens' theories of modernity also play a vital part in the emergence of these themes. This section gives an account of issues arising from these themes.

The first main theme is *norm*. Many theories of crime assume the existence of a uni-

⁵⁰See: Chapter Three, Section 3.1.2 (*The research process: adaptive theorising*).

versal value system in society and behaviours that do not agree with the system are considered to be deviant. Consequently, it is important to test this assumption by investigating whether there is a universal value system at work in Second Life, if not, what are the most influential systems of norms in this context? Social structures and norms are both a resource for individuals to make sense of their actions and a product of these actions (Giddens 1984). Different norms are, be they institutional or local, agreements between different groups of people about actions and behaviours. Second Life is a user-defined cybercommunity constituted by thousands of sub-communities, with different social themes. Each of the sub-communities may have its local norms and Second Life may have its own global norms. Individuals respond to different systems of norms plant seeds from which power structures emerge. Consequently, the second main theme is *power*. It is the individual residents who need to make sense of them, no matter how diverse or complicated norms and power structures are. Unlike most real world social contexts, individual residents in Second Life have complete freedom of creation and power to dispense with all their real world appearance. All sorts of activities, including the deviant ones are carried out via these avatars. Perhaps, an individual's creation of, and identification with, his/her avatar may have an important role in influencing his/her perception of deviance in Second Life. For this reason, the third theme is an individual resident's *self-identity*.

Anonymity — one of the fundamental attractions of Second Life, is connected with the lowering of social inhibition and consequently, an interpretation of Second Life as a natural hotbed of deviant activities. Moreover, deviant activities are those that deviate from social norms. The systems of norms in Second Life may not be consistent with one another. Actually, they may sometimes work against one another, resulting in a situation where even generally accepted activities may be considered to be deviant in some special sub-communities. No one can be physically punished for performing deviant activities in Second Life. These characteristics make Second Life a fertile ground for deviant activities. Given these observations, why do individuals behave themselves in Second Life? Social bonding theory appears to be an appropriate choice to address this question. Based on the central question of *Why do individuals obey the rules of society?*, social bonding theory takes deviance for granted and offers an explanation for conformity (Hirschi 1969). *Conformity*, therefore, is the fourth theme. Although the four themes are analysed on an individual basis, the interpretive relationships among these themes are reflected during the process of their identification. The analysis of conformity as the fourth theme is reflexively constructed based on issues that have emerged in the discussion of the previous three themes, as knowledge is continuously revised in the light of incoming information.

4.2.1 Norm

In Second Life, an individual's perception of deviance may be influenced by the following four main types of norm: *institutional norms*, *local norms*, *sub-cultural norms* and *notions of deviance*. Institutional norms refer to universal and formal rules and regulations that are established by the creator and regulator of Second Life, Linden Lab. Institutional norms carry with them a sense of authority and deterrence, covering all sub-communities. Besides institutional norms, each of the thousands of sub-communities in Second Life may have its own local norms.

Moreover, the mutual interests that individuals have in different sub-communities and groups may form some loosely defined local or group norms. Some of these may be similar with institutional norms, the others may differ significantly from them. For example, there are various sub-cultural groups within sub-communities, making sense of the social structure of Second Life in their own terms. Furthermore, there are some generally established notions of deviance that may be accepted across different sub-communities in Second Life and different cybercommunities, including Second Life, e.g., not to reveal the real world identity of another avatar.

Institutional norms

In Second Life, the term 'institutional norms' refers to norms and rules that should be accepted and obeyed by all residents. These norms and rules are set by Linden Lab. Some of the most obvious ones can be found in the Second Life Community Standards.⁵¹

All residents in Second Life, including its in-world and out-world environments, are expected to observe the Community Standards: "treat each other with respect and without harassment, adhere to local standards as indicated by simulator ratings, and refrain from any hate activity which slurs a real world individual or real world community".⁵² The Community Standards set out six kinds of major 'crime' in Second Life, known as the 'Big Six': intolerance, harassment, assault, disclosure, indecency and disturbing the peace.⁵³

Intolerance means failing to respect other residents' race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. Harassment is defined by Linden Lab as "Communicating or behaving in a manner which is offensively coarse, intimidating, or threatening, constitutes unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours, or is otherwise likely to cause annoyance or alarm".⁵⁴ Assault includes shooting, pushing, or shoving another residents

⁵¹A complete version of the Second Life Community Standards can be found in Appendix 15.

⁵²See: <http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php>; accessed 9/1/2008.

⁵³See: <http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php>; accessed 9/1/2008.

⁵⁴See: <http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php>; accessed 09/01/2008.

in a Safe Area.⁵⁵ Any other activities that prevent other residents from enjoying Second Life are also considered as assault. Prohibiting the act of disclosure means that residents of Second Life are expected to respect the personal privacy of other residents, especially the 1st life personal information that a resident knows about another resident. Indecent behaviours, including sex and nudity are not welcome, except in some areas and sub-communities that are built for these purposes. Disturbing the peace includes deliberately disrupting live events, bombarding Second Life with advertising, stealing other people's property.

Intellectual property protection is another global norm. Second Life is a user-defined world, which means residents create more contents than Linden Lab and the trading of content is a lucrative business. A resident who creates an object may retain certain rights like copyright in the real world. The creator can mark an object as 'no copy' — no copies of it may be made by others, 'no mod' — others may not modify the object's characteristics, as well as, 'no trans' — the current owner may not give the object to another. The servers keep an explicit copyright notice with every object. The Linden Lab's client program then refuses to copy, modify, give away or resell the object, unless the creator has included these digital rights in the copyright notice. Besides technological protection, Linden Lab also depends on the *Second Life Term of Service* and the *Digital Millennium Copyright Act* (US DMCA) to discourage unfair use of client programs, such as CopyBot.⁵⁶ CopyBot is a program that can log onto Second Life as an avatar. It allows users to make copies of objects without the permission of their creators.⁵⁷ Currently, CopyBot is banned in Second Life.

On July 25, 2007, gambling became an illegal activity in Second Life. The *Policy Regarding Wagering in Second Life* indicates that "It is a violation of this policy to wager in games in the Second Life environment operated on Linden Lab servers if such games:

- (1) (a) rely on chance or random number generation to determine a winner, OR
 - (b) rely on the outcome of real-life organized sporting events,
- AND
- (2) provide a payout in
 - (a) Linden Dollars, OR
 - (b) any real-world currency or thing of value".⁵⁸

⁵⁵Most areas in Second Life are defined as safe. However, there are a few clearly marked areas where shooting, fighting, pushing and shoving are allowed.

⁵⁶See: <http://blog.secondlife.com/2006/11/14/use-of-copybot-and-similar-tools-a-tos-violation/>; accessed 09/01/2008.

⁵⁷See: <http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Help:CopyBot>; accessed 09/01/2008.

⁵⁸See: <http://blog.secondlife.com/2007/07/25/wagering-in-second-life-new-policy/>; accessed 09/01/2008.

The policy appeared to be effectively carried out since all casinos in the popular casino islands had disappeared over a matter of days during the observation. Many islands became empty and abandoned. This policy also reflects Linden Lab's approach towards governing Second Life. Second Life has an international participation and different countries may have different policies regarding the illegality of gambling. Linden Lab cannot identify which gambling activities may be legal where a particular resident lives in the real world. It can only take a broad approach by prohibiting all games that meet the criteria in its policy and make sure the policy applies to all residents of Second Life, equally. Moreover, Linden Lab highlights that it is the residents' responsibility to comply with the laws of local jurisdiction in which they reside.⁵⁹

On January 8, 2008, Linden Lab announced a new policy prohibiting in-world banking activities, because there were complaints about several in-world banks promising unusually high rates of L\$ return, but defaulting on their promises. This policy has been put into practice since January 22, 2008. This new policy prohibits the offering of "interest or any direct return on an investment (whether in L\$ or other currency) from any object, such as an ATM, located in Second Life, without proof of an applicable government registration statement or financial institution charter".⁶⁰

Local norms

In Second Life, each sim is both a geographical and administrative unit. The Community Standard states that all residents should adhere to local standards as indicated by sim ratings, which may be PG or Mature. Residents who are under the age of 18 are advised to enter Teen Grid, instead of the main Second Life grid. All sims in the Teen Grid are PG, so there should be an absence of any kind of obscene or violent material. However, there is no method available to either detect or deter individuals under 18 from entering false information while registering with the main Second Life grid.

In Second Life, many sims are organised by large management groups such as the Azure Island management group and the Dreamland management group. These groups have their own localised regulations, which may be applicable to all sims owned by them. For example, Anshe Chung's Dreamland has its *Zoning Ruleset A*.⁶¹ The Dreamland is separated into 12 distinctive themes. These themes range from *Gothica*, to *Arabia*, to *Asia*.⁶² The Dreamland management group strongly urges its residents to give absolute

⁵⁹See: <http://blog.secondlife.com/2007/07/25/wagering-in-second-life-new-policy>; accessed 09/01/2008.

⁶⁰See: <http://blog.secondlife.com/2008/01/08/new-policy-regarding-in-world-banks>; accessed 12/01/2008.

⁶¹See: http://dreamland.anshechung.com/include/Dreamland_A.html; accessed 12/01/2008.

⁶²See: <http://dreamland.anshechung.com>; accessed 12/01/2008.

respect to these themes. It means that buildings of an oriental style are not welcome in sims that belong to the Gothica theme. The Zoning Ruleset A also includes some regulations regarding inappropriate conducts. Compared to other areas in the Dreamland, the residential areas have more aggressive security systems. Many private houses in these areas are protected by very effective security systems (see: figure 4.20 & 4.21).

Some of the sub-communities are built for residents to carry out behaviours that may be considered as deviant by the larger society in the real world. Most of these places are fairly tawdry and deal with some elicit sexual activities, such as sexual activities with child-like avatars. Observation has revealed that some of these institutional norms in Second Life are not observed by residents in these sub-communities. Moreover, many sims are built for specific purposes, if a resident enters a sim built for the purpose of general relaxation to start a political debate, his/her behaviour may be considered as deviant by other residents in the particular sim.

Sub-cultural norms

Individuals involved in cybercommunities and other forms of online social interaction may experience a form of disinhibition (Williams 2003). Psychological studies (e.g., Reicher et al. 1995) exploring the phenomenon of disinhibited behaviour online suggest that the possibility to remain anonymous is one of the main precursors to such behaviour. In general, anonymity is accused of facilitating the lowering of social inhibitions, encouraging anti-social behaviour and aggression (Lieberman et al. 1999).

Some residents may participate in Second Life to disrupt the experience of other residents. These residents are known as *griefers*. Bad behaviours of the griefers include trolling (deliberately provoking unnecessary argument), flaming (naming calling), spamming (bombarding other residents with advertising or other forms of junk), harassing, dropping stuff in other residents' Inventories, etc. Linden Lab estimates as much as 25% of all customer service calls are down to complaints about griefers (Carr & Pond 2007).

The grieving sub-culture, found in Second Life could be found in cybercommunity of the mid 1970s, when the Bulletin Board System *CommuniTree* collapsed under "the onslaught of messages, often obscene, posted by the first generation of adolescent school children with personal computers and modems" (Reid 1999, p. 107). In the 1990s, the grieving sub-culture, partly brought about by the ability to stay anonymous in cybercommunities was well known. Curtis wrote: "the protective anonymity [in cybercommunities] also encourages some players to behave irresponsibly, rudely, or even obnoxiously. We have had instances of severe and repeated sexual harassment, crudity, and deliberate offensiveness. In general, such cruelty seems to be supported by two causes: the offenders believe that they can not be held accountable for their actions in the real world, and

the very same anonymity makes it easier for them to treat other players impersonally, as other than real people” (Curtis 1992, p. 130).

Moreover, the grieving sub-culture in Second Life is often linked to griefer communities. Some of these communities are known for their harassing behaviours which are generally considered as deviant. Others are of a more ambivalent nature. For example, the SLLA (Second Life Liberation Army) is very close to an anti government group.⁶³ This group was formed as a result of a Second Life national liberation movement. The members of this group think Linden Lab is functioning as an authoritarian government and the only appropriate response to this is to fight. On August 10, 2006, the SLLA attacked American Apparel’s in-world store and physically prevented many other avatars from purchasing goods.⁶⁴ At the time of observation, the SLLA still demands in-world voting and free shares from Linden Lab to every single resident in Second Life. Until these demands are met, the SLLA would continue its campaign of violence against sites of Linden Lab and other important sites within Second Life. Perhaps, members of the SLLA consider themselves as vigilante heroes of Second Life. Nevertheless, to Linden Lab and some residents in Second Life, they might be perceived as griefers.

Besides the SLLA, there are other less political and more generally accepted vigilante groups fighting against deviant individuals and groups. In 2005, after a massive attack by some griefers at three of Second Life’s main Sandboxes, a group of residents decided it was time to take things into their own hands and teach the griefers a lesson. As a result, the *SL Alliance* was born to protect the Sandboxes against abuse. In October 2005, the SL Alliance set up its permanent home in the sim *Enceladus*. Since it is a self-appointed volunteer vigilante force having no official permit from Linden Lab, many residents think the SL Alliance may be able to respond to problems at a faster speed than Linden Lab, whereas others worry about the potential of this group becoming an authoritarian force.⁶⁵ In response to this worry, Linden Lab has formed its own *Linden Governance & Response Team*. The members of this team hold official hours on an island in the sim *Kremer* at 10 a.m., from Monday to Friday.

Perhaps, to Linden Lab and other large management groups, these vigilante groups are deviant trouble makers. Some residents may welcome these groups while others are opposed to them seizing the power.

Notions of deviance

⁶³See: <http://secondlla.googlepages.com/>; accessed 12/01/2008.

⁶⁴See: <http://www.whatpc.co.uk/vnunet/news/2184013/terrorist-hit-second-life>; accessed 12/01/2008.

⁶⁵See: http://www.secondlifeferald.com/slh/2005/07/defending_the_b.html; accessed 12/01/2008.

Second Life is one of hundreds, if not thousands of cybercommunities. The nature of deviance in Second Life may be influenced by some existing notions of deviance in cybercommunities identified by past criminological research.

In Chapter Two,⁶⁶ several forms of deviant activities that may occur in most cybercommunities were discussed, including cyber vandalism, cyber trespass, spamming, cyber theft, cyber violence (cyber hate speech and cyber rape), cyber obscenity or pornography, cyberstalking, etc. Particularly, in Williams' (2006a) research on deviance and control in Activeworlds, he has identified nine different types of deviant activities in the cybercommunity, as follows (Williams 2006a, p. 72):⁶⁷

1. Profanity 52.5%;
2. Harassment 27%;
3. Flooding 7.5%;
4. Vandalism 6.1%;
5. Obscenity 3%;
6. Sexual harassment 1.4%;
7. Impersonating a peace keeper 0.8%;
8. Racial Harassment 0.8%;
9. Unknown offence 0.9%.

Residents' perception of deviance in Second Life may be influenced by their perception of deviance in other cybercommunities similar to Second Life, such as Activeworlds. Activeworlds was launched to the public in 1997, six years prior to the public launch of Second Life. Like Second Life, Activeworlds is an advanced 3D cybercommunity, in which residents are free to socialise, build their own homes and community infrastructures. With these in mind, some findings from Williams' (2006a) research are discussed in relation to Second Life.

In Williams' (2006a) research, profanity is defined as the use of bad language. The use of bad language is disapproved of in Activeworlds mainly because some community members may be children (Williams 2006a). However, not all cybercommunities are as open about their memberships as Activeworlds. For example, in theory, the main grid of Second Life has a more restricted membership. The use of bad language may not be considered deviant in the main grid of Second Life, since all residents are supposed to be 18 and over.

Deviant acts that occur frequently in Activeworlds are those that may be committed

⁶⁶See: Chapter Two, Section 2.2.2 (*Deviant acts in cybercommunities*).

⁶⁷"The figures demonstrate rates of ejection by offence category over a six month period as classified by the Peace keepers" (community police in Activeworlds) (Williams 2006a, p. 72).

via sending text messages without much technical difficulty, such as profanity (52.5%), harassment (27.0%) and flooding (7.5%) (Williams 2006a, p. 72). These activities may be recognised as deviant in most cybercommunities, including Second Life. Nevertheless, the rates of occurrence of these activities, in Second Life, may differ significantly, because of the technical infrastructure and social characteristics of individual cybercommunities, even sub-communities in these cybercommunities. For example, activities such as obscenity may have a higher rate of occurrence in cybercommunities that are graphically rich rather than text based cybercommunities, since the ability to create vivid graphic image may aggravate such activity. Following this, graphically rich obscene activities may manifest frequently in Second Life.

The remaining activities such as vandalism and impersonating a Peacekeeper (PK) may be bred by some specific technological and social characteristics of Activeworlds. Williams wrote: “the instances of non-textual deviant acts, such as vandalism, vary from other computer-related offences, such as cyber theft and cyber obscenity, in that they are born out of and are a product of the online community being studied” (Williams 2006a, p. 73). In the case of Activeworlds, its technical nature being 3D graphics based has made vandalism possible (Williams 2006a). Moreover, the fact that residents are able to build infrastructures, such as their own homes and community centres in Activeworlds, makes vandalism, a more personal and emotional issue. Williams further suggests “impersonating a Peacekeeper or spoofing is enabled by the existence of three-dimensional avatars” (Williams 2006a, p. 73). Following these, vandalism and impersonating another avatar may have rather frequent occurrence in Second Life, since based on Williams’ (2006a) writing, Activeworlds has similar technological infrastructure and social characteristics as Second Life.

Both social characteristics and technological capabilities of a cybercommunity have significant influence on the breeding of specific types of deviance in the particular cybercommunity. Williams wrote: “unconventional forms of deviance are more likely to be found in online environments which are unconventional themselves” (Williams 2006a, p. 73). With this in mind, it is important to investigate how persistent conventional deviant activities are in the specific context of Second Life, as well as, whether there are unconventional forms of activities that are perceived as deviant by some residents in Second Life.

4.2.2 Power

Cybercommunities have often been presented as sites of freedom and milieus of escape where participants are released from social structures and constraints of the real world.

This is true in the original design of Second Life as “a public park with minimum rules” (Guest 2007, p. 73), as well as, forms of non-hierarchical social structures, such as friendship structure and group structure. Residents in Second Life may associate and make friends with others with whom they might not associate in the real life, because of difference in social status. However, all social contexts are structured by inequality; forms of status and authority exist even in primitive societies (Collier 1988). Even in the *metaverse* of Stephenson’s *Snow Crash* (1993), there exists social distinctions between the powerful and powerless. In Second Life, the structure of governance determines the difference in power between those with the authority to govern, such as Linden Lab and Dreamland management group, and those who are governed. Moreover, there may be power struggles between an individual and a corporation, an individual and a community, as well as, an ordinary resident and a Second Life elite. These power struggles may have some impact on the nature of deviance in Second Life. Residents from different social classes may have different perceptions of deviance. Moreover, an ordinary resident’s perception of deviance may be heavily influenced by institutional rules and regulations in Second Life, which are set up by Linden Lab.

Individual vs. Corporation

Second Life is a virtual society with a successful economy. Various business corporations have been set up by residents and some of these exploit residents in Second Life.

The most popular economic activity in Second Life is the buying and selling of land. Linden Lab allows Premium account holders to own up to 512 square meters of land without additional fees. Additional land can be purchased by paying a *Land Use Fee*, which ranges from US\$5 for a small piece of land, to US\$195 per month for an entire sim. The price of land may differ significantly in areas that are managed by private management groups. Residents can bid on pieces of land in auctions. The first real world commercial company River Run Red made its appearance in Second Life through a land action in 2004. As the highest bidder of Avalon, the owner of River Run Red has the sole renting rights and ultimate power to do whatever he wants in the entire sim of Avalon.

The auction system started the corporate movement in Second Life. Many residents feel threatened, because they may potentially be pushed out of the healthy competition for land by wealthy corporations (Carr & Pond 2007). Moreover, with the increasing participation of real world corporations in Second Life, the cybercommunity may be exploited as a marketing tool. This is against the belief of many residents in Second Life. More importantly, since estate owners are able to implement their own policy within their estates, they may potentially become the main policy makers of the entire Second

Life community, turning Second Life into a tertiary society that some residents do not wish to live in.

Individual vs. Community

Williams (2003) suggests that community based methods of punishment are more effective than tertiary ones in cybercommunities. Perhaps, this is because residents have closer bonds with their immediate communities and groups in Second Life rather than Second Life as a society. Moreover, due to the size and diversity of the themes in Second Life community at large, it is very difficult for Linden Lab to draft detailed rules and policies that may be applicable in all sub-communities and groups, as well as, accepted by all residents in Second Life. Moreover, Linden Lab's insistence in upholding the principle of "we don't step in the middle of Resident-to-Resident conduct-letting, Residents decide how to act, live, or play in Second Life"⁶⁸ makes the possibility of Second Life ever having a detailed and uniformly applied behaviour policy rather slim.

Community justice seems to coincide with the existing governance structure of Second Life. Actually, most cybercommunities employ a form of community policing which focuses on the maintenance of community norms, while using surveillance technologies that is inherent to the context to facilitate both primary and secondary social control functions, and coupled with the mediation of any disparities that arise from national or jurisdictional legal differences in definition (Wall 2007). Moreover, it is suggested that within Activeworlds, regulations of deviant activities have "rapidly matured over several years from an oligarchic and vigilante-based system to a formal policing model" (Wall & Williams 2007, p. 402).

In Second Life, perhaps, due to its large size and social diversity, a unified maturation process could not be clearly identified. There are various kinds of systems of regulation working simultaneously, including formal policing models, oligarchic and vigilante-based system. However, Linden Lab is the only governing body that is able to practice formal methods of punishment, including warning, suspension of account and cancellation of account. None of these punishments extends beyond Second Life to reach the person physically. Following this, the effectiveness of these methods of punishment is highly dependent on the extent a resident values his/her existence in Second Life. If the resident spends a significant amount of time and energy in creating his/her avatar and building relationships with other residents, then he/she has much to lose if his/her account is cancelled. On the other hand, if the resident considers his/her participation in Second Life as a game, then he/she may not be too concerned when his/her account is canceled.

⁶⁸See: <http://blog.secondlife.com/2008/01/08/new-policy-regarding-in-world-banks/>; accessed 14/01/2008.

Moreover, Second Life uses an email-address based registration system, the resident can simply join Second Life again using a different email account. Of course, the resident's computer IP (Internet Protocol) address could be traced and his/her computer blocked, but this can be easily subverted by using a different computer. Moreover, it is a common knowledge that currently, many IP addresses are randomly generated by Internet Service Providers (ISP) and change periodically. Contacting the ISP of the resident and ask the ISP to cease providing Internet service may also be simply subverted by switching to a different service provider.

Compared with formal methods of punishment, community based methods of punishment, such as vigilante justice, peer pressure and ostracism, are preferred by many residents to maintain order in Activeworlds (Williams 2006a). According to Williams (2006a) the practice of community shaming, especially reintegrative shaming results in a reduction in recidivism in Activeworlds. However, the effectiveness of community shaming is largely dependent on a resident's bond to the particular community involved, which is discussed in the later part of this section.

Moreover, the notion of community is more complex in Second Life. Besides graphically defined communities constituted by sims, there are also communities based on group structures across spans of time and space. Each of these groups are built by residents based on a specific interest or agenda, including politics, religion, gaming, community governance, technology, avatar creation, etc. A complete list of these groups can be found via the Search tab on the in-world tool bar. Some of these groups are private, others are for all residents to join freely. Some of these groups are maintained by asynchronous and private communication, which can be one-to-one or one-to-many, via email and IM. The others may be maintained by synchronous communication: members of a group have a specific place to meet up and discuss about things they are interested. Some of the groups have built their own sims, which are only accessible to members of these groups. In these groups, community shaming may be effective. However, since the group creator of each group has the technical access and authority to delete other members of the Group, community shaming may not be practiced at all.

Second Life Elites

Actually, social inequality has been an integral part of many cybercommunities, especially those designed for gaming (Jakobsson & Taylor 2003). Early online gaming cybercommunities are often goal orientated with ranked statuses indicating the level each player is at. Usually, players at higher levels of the game would have more power and privilege. For example, in some text-based gaming cybercommunities, players at higher levels of the games may have the statuses of gods and wizards, privileged access

to the game platforms and even power to remove other players (Kendall 2002).

In Second Life, the *Lindens*,⁶⁹ staff employed by Linden Lab, have godlike power over the other residents. Below the Lindens, there exist a class of elite residents. In Second Life, there is no single criterion for residents to become more powerful since it does not have a system of leveling as many gaming oriented cybercommunities. However, Second Life's account structure separates residents into different social classes, before they even enter the Second Life in-world environment. A resident's strength is determined by his/her account type.⁷⁰ A Basic Account resident cannot own land unless he/she converts to a Premium Account. This system provides an opportunity for those with money to own huge amounts of virtual land in Second Life and become very powerful. For example, Anshe Chung, the creator and owner of one of the six continents has the power to make policies in her large estates, which makes her highly powerful and influential.

Some of these elite residents are real world celebrities who enjoy the privilege of keeping their real world surnames if they choose to. Others have gained their privilege through their participation in Second Life. In a cybercommunity built by advanced computer software, such as Second Life, residents who have the technical power to build and create may become more powerful. Being technically able may also help residents to rise to power in Second Life, e.g., Torley Linden.⁷¹

4.2.3 Self-identity

No matter how diverse the systems of norms and complicated power structures are, it is the individual residents who need to make sense of them. A resident lives in Second Life via his/her avatar, which may be viewed as the image of the self. Since the self is reflexively made, the construction of the avatar is, therefore, shaped by, as well as, shape the self-identity of an individual. With this in mind, an individual's creation of, and identification with, his/her avatar may strongly influence his/her perception of deviance.

Second Life provides its residents with 3D and 'nth' degree avatar creation tools, resulting in a physical diversity unmatched by any place on earth. Avatar creation seems to coincide with Giddens' notion of *The body and self-actualisation*.⁷² The analysis of an individual's self-identity rests upon three intertwining aspects: the construction of self, the cyberbody and the building of a deviant identity. Each of these aspects may be infinitely related to the reasons behind an individual's participation in Second Life.

⁶⁹Many employees of Linden Lab participate in Second Life through avatars having the surname of 'Linden'.

⁷⁰See: Section 4.1.2 (*People and community*).

⁷¹See: Section 4.1.2 (*People and community*).

⁷²See: Chapter Two, Section 2.2.1 (*Pluralism and ontological insecurity*).

The construction of self

The ability to keep one's real life identity anonymous is one of the main appeals of Second Life. The entry into Second Life requires no more information than an email address. In fact, the disclosure of another resident's real world identity is one of the Big Six major 'crimes' in Second Life. The theme of self construction resonates with the physical diversity in Second Life. Perhaps, having an avatar that bears no resemblance of one's real world physical self may help the person disassociate himself/herself from being accountable for his/her activities in Second Life, including the deviant ones. For example, if a resident chooses to represent himself/herself as a Furry and feels no obvious connection with his/her Furry avatar, then he/she may feel it is fine to attack other avatars, due to a number of possible rationalisations. For example, the resident may think nothing is real or have serious consequences in a place where one is able to be a Furry. Moreover, he/she may think if he/she is not taking his/her life in Second Life seriously, then other residents may not taking it seriously as well, therefore, it is fine to do things do them that are obviously deviant in the real world.

As discussed in normal appearance,⁷³ although the notion of bearing resemblance may be expressed in terms of the created avatar, it lies beyond the level of physical appearance. Perhaps, the degree of identification between an individual and his/her avatar is intimately associated with the reasons behind his/her participation in Second Life. If a participant joins Second Life to enjoy some gaming experience, then he/she may not take Second Life and activities in this context seriously. Consequently, he/she may be less likely to consider non-conventional activities in Second Life as deviant and more likely to perform these activities.

With these in mind, the empirical investigation of the notion of resemblance rests upon how much an individual identifies with his/her created avatar, instead of physical resemblance. If an individual intends to participate in Second Life to get away from the social life-worlds in the real world, as well as, spends much time and energy in creating a Furry avatar that he/she identifies with deeply, then the likelihood of him/her using the avatar to perform deviant activities without being aware of the implications of his/her acts, may be quite slim. On the other hand, an individual may have an avatar that is a 3D replica of himself. However, he/she may not feel any sense of guilt instructing his/her avatar to deviate if he/she perceives Second Life as an advanced computer game and only joins the community to have a bit of adventure and fun.

The cyberbody

⁷³See: Chapter Two, Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

If freedom of self creation is one of the main attractions of Second Life, then why has the ‘Wonderland Scandal’⁷⁴ caused such a big stir?

Wonderland is a sub-community in Second Life. In this sub-community, child-like avatars are found to be offering virtual sex to other avatars (see: figure 4.23). Avatar creation takes a certain level of technological skill. Therefore, there may not be any child involvement at all. Adults are more likely to be behind those child-like avatars. Nevertheless, experts from different professions still consider the involvement of child-like avatars in sexual activities to be intolerable:⁷⁵

- Zoe Hilton, NSPCC policy advisor, said: “It is not OK to fantasise about this stuff. These kind of interactions need to be shut down”.
- Jim Gamble, of the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Agency, said: “Virtual Crime has real victims, ultimately, and we have see it time and time again. My concern is that when they step out of the fantasy world they bring that fantasy with them into the real world and they ultimately seek to act that out”.
- Concerned with the potential of real life crime that individuals involved in child-play may ultimately seek to act out, the last Home Secretary, Jacque Smith planed to publish a consultation paper on whether to outlaw virtual imagery of child abuse used in cybercommunities.⁷⁶ Jacque Smith said: “We are concerned about the way in which using computer generated images people might be developing a set of behaviours that could then go on to used to harm children”.



Figure 4.23: Child abuse

The Wonderland Scandal suggests that the connection between Second Life and the real world not only lies in the perception of deviance that may be brought from the real world to Second Life, but also the possibility of residents bringing deviant activities in Second Life back to the real world. As discussed in Chapter Two,⁷⁷ having a bodily image in cyber-

communities enables the observation of bodily activities, which is intrinsic to the continuous reflexive awareness of the self (Giddens 1991). The relevance of this continuous

⁷⁴See: http://news.cnet.com/Phony-kids,-virtual-sex/2100-1043_3-6060132.html; accessed 13/01/2008.

⁷⁵See: <http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/Sky-News-Archive/Article/20080641290719>; accessed 13/01/2008.

⁷⁶To this date, no consultation paper has been published on this subject (24/08/2009).

⁷⁷See: Section, 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

reflexive awareness of the self to an understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life is discussed later.⁷⁸

The building of a deviant identity

In Second Life, some residents not only have avatars that are completely different from their real world physical images, but also behave, via these avatars, very differently from their real world behaviours. As discussed in Chapter Two,⁷⁹ Blundell et al.'s (2002) research on online sex abusers presents this modern version of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde".



Figure 4.24: Marsellus Wallace (left) with associates

in Second Life, only a few are truly deviant. Moreover, some avatars in Second Life may not have deviant images but deviant reputations. For example, one of the most notorious deviants in Second Life, Marcellus Wallace (see: figure 4.24) created the *Sim Mafia* group in the game *Sims Online* long before the creation of Second Life. On January 15, 2005, he migrated his mafia group to Second Life and started building a virtual reputation of *Jon Gotti* in Second Life. Although he does not represent himself with a deviant outlook, his profile description of the avatar may be considered to be deviant "... Even if you don't like someone, they should never know it. Get them when they least expect it".⁸⁰ Marcellus Mallace 'kills' other residents in a subtle manner: he bullies them with messages till they cease to participate in Second Life.⁸¹

⁷⁸See: Chapter Five, Section 5.3.2 (*The reflexivity of modernity and ontological insecurity*).

⁷⁹See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

⁸⁰See: http://www.secondlifeherald.com/slh/2006/03/mafia_boss_gain.html; accessed 14/01/2008.

⁸¹See: <http://www.pocketgamer.co.uk/r/Various/The+Buzz/feature.asp?c=6967>; accessed 14/01/2009.

4.2.4 Conformity

Although criminological analysis of crime in cyberspace, especially deviance in cybercommunities, is in its infancy, there are some valuable investigations. For example, drawing support from environmental criminology, Newman and Clarke (2003) suggest that situational crime prevention may be able to reduce E-commerce crime in the information society at large. Supporting Newman and Clarke, Williams (2004) suggests that situational crime prevention is suitable for tackling online vandalism in cybercommunities. More importantly, in Williams' (2003) doctoral thesis, a combined theoretical position of Hirschi's social bonding theory (1969) and self-control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990), with additional sociological theorising is used to explain online antisocial activity in Activeworlds.

The theoretical disposition of social bonding theory seems suitable to be used in the analysis of deviance in Second Life. Based on the central question — Why do individuals obey the rules of society? — social bonding theory assumes that deviant acts occur when an individual's bond to society is subject to atrophy and introduces four main forces of control over individuals: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Hirschi 1969). Social bonding theory takes deviance for granted and sets out to explain conformity, which may be central to the nature of deviance in Second Life. Second Life is characterised by several features that may make any social context a nature hotbed of deviance. Firstly, anonymity, often connected with the lowering of social inhibition is one of the fundamental attractions of Second Life. Secondly, Second Life has highly complicated mechanisms of norms that may sometimes work against one and another, resulting in a situation where even generally accepted activities may be considered as deviant in some sub-communities designed for specific purposes. Thirdly, no one can be physically punished for performing deviant activities in Second Life. Why do individuals behave themselves in Second Life?

With all these in mind, conformity is identified as the fourth main theme. In the analysis, the four main forces of control over individuals, are discussed in terms of the bond between individual residents and the cybercommunity Second Life. Many basic notions in the four main forces are kept and their roles in Second Life are discussed. Williams' (2003) analysis of social bonding and self-control theories in Activeworlds, is used as a guideline for this analysis. Although many issues have already been discussed previously, putting them in the context of an established criminological theory would reveal their relevance for criminology.

Attachment and commitment

In social bonding theory, the concept of attachment rests upon the idea that man is sensitive to the opinion of others. Attachment refers to the capacity of individuals to form effective relationship with other people and institutions. Individuals are more likely to be concerned with the opinions and expectations of others when attachments are strong, therefore, more likely to behave in accordance with them. A person can be attached to various things, such as another person, family, peer group and community. The bond of affection for non-deviant others is a major deterrent to crime, whereas bond of affection for deviant others would induce crime (Hirschi 1969).

Some findings from Williams' (2003) research, such as the lack of physicality, fragility and playfulness of relationships in Activeworlds, seem to suggest the existence of weak personal and social bond in the cybercommunity. Williams (2003) suggests that many residents in Activeworlds value the process of interaction more than the outcome, which means that they may disregard accountability and ignore consequences of their actions. Williams (2003) also suggests that it is difficult for some residents to forge long-lasting and serious relationships online, which has ramifications for levels of attachment to significant others in Activeworlds. Clark (1998) suggests that Internet dating is more frequently employed for fleeting and fun relationships that hold little consequence in real life. Some residents in Activeworlds believe that communication technologies in general reduce the attachment individuals can forge with one another (Williams 2003).



Figure 4.25: Taylor and Pollard's Second Life wedding

These findings and suggestions may be valid to a certain extent. However, the void of physicality and the apparent playful nature of cybercommunities may result in a perceived necessity to build permanent structures, so as to help embed meaning into interactions and identity online (Lash 2001). Perhaps, this may partly explain the existence of various relationship structures in Second Life, including Friendship Card, Group and Partner Ship. Personal attachment to these relationship

structures may potentially be very strong. Various research has demonstrated that some relationships online may be emotionally intense (e.g., Markham 1998; Turkle 1996). Sometimes, this emotional intensity may cause problems, especially when the real world

and Second Life collide.⁸²

For example, Amy Taylor met her husband David Pollard in Second Life in May 2003. They married in July 2005, while their Second Life avatars also had a marriage ceremony (see: figure 4.25). Taylor divorced Pollard after she caught him having an affair with another female avatar in Second Life. Pollard is now married to the female avatar he was having an online affair with in Second Life. He is also engaged to the woman behind the avatar, despite never having met her in real life. Meanwhile, Taylor has found a new love through the fantasy online role-playing game *World of Warcraft*.

Amy's divorce solicitor said it was not the first divorce through Second Life he had dealt with.⁸³ Experts from different professions have commented on this incident.⁸⁴

- Sigman, a psychologist, suggests that there is no doubt that this type of divorce is going to be an increasing phenomenon, especially when the Facebook generation grows up.
- Griffiths, from Nottingham Trent University, suggests that deep relationships are easy to form, because the Internet is a non-threatening environment.
- Newbury, a divorce lawyer, says that the court system will not have to change because even though affairs in cyberspace are legally not adultery, however, they do constitute unreasonable behaviour and the divorce can be granted on the grounds of unreasonable behaviour.

Actually, more likely than not, a real world community is defined by geography, profession or kin relations. Individuals in these communities are more likely to be attached to another person out of necessity rather than choice: attachment is fostered based on socially constructed statuses, rather than personal emotional choices. As discussed in Chapter Two,⁸⁵ in Second Life, residents may be able to experience *pure relationships*. In Second Life, relationships may be very emotionally intense, partly because in real life people get to know one another from the outside in, whereas in Second Life, people get to know one another from the inside out — the appearance and personality of an avatar may be created to present what a person really wants to be.

It is possible that relationships in Second Life can be more emotionally intensive than real world ones. Upon leaving the real world, individuals may have stronger desire to

⁸²See: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jnjsn1IPRc0OC5a4s1iGLDlGmbPQ>; accessed 22/01/2009.

⁸³See: http://www.techdigest.tv/2008/11/marriage_ends_a.html; accessed 22/01/2009.

⁸⁴See: <http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/UK-News/Second-Life-Virtual-Reality-Divorce-Cases-Will-Increase-Say-Internet-Addiction-Psychologists/Article/200811215151635>; accessed 22/01/2009.

⁸⁵See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

bond with others, in order to maintain a sense of ontological security. In practice, this desire may provide a better understanding of some individuals' attachment to Second Life. This attachment also creates a bond between the real world and Second Life, since it is the individuals in the real world who experience it. In some cases, deviant activities in Second Life and other cybercommunities have real life consequences. For example, in August 2008, a woman in Delaware was charged with plotting the real-life abduction of a boyfriend she met in Second Life.⁸⁶ In another case, psychological trauma caused by relationship breakdown drove a woman to commit crime. A Japanese woman could face up to five years in prison or a fine of more than £3,000 if convicted for 'murdering' her online husband in Maple Story, a cybercommunity like Second Life.⁸⁷ After finding out that he suddenly 'divorced' her, the woman used the man's username and password to log into Maple Story and deleted his avatar. Although she was arrested on suspicion of illegally accessing a computer and manipulating electronic data, many newspaper articles referred the incident as 'virtual murder' or 'virtual killing'. The man made a complaint to the police after discovering the death of his avatar.

Complaining to the police after discovering the death of one's avatar displays a very strong attachment between the individual and his avatar. Perhaps, a strong attachment also exists between a person and his/her avatar in Second Life. With this in mind, perhaps, residents would feel rather strongly about deviant acts against the avatar.

Commitment and involvement

The notion of commitment assumes that society is organised in such a way that the interest of most people may be potentially endangered if they engage in criminal acts. This interest refers to various conventional activities in which individuals invest time and energy, such as attaining an education, developing a career and building a reputation. Individuals who invest heavily in these activities will not want to risk losing their investments. The concept of involvement concerns the degree of an individual's engagement with conventional activities. It assumes that a person may simply be too busy to consider performing a non-conventional act, if he/she is involved with conventional lines of activity. Conversely, if a person is not involved with conventional activities, then he/she may be free to perform deviant acts.

Williams (2003) suggests that being untied from conventional activities of the real world may result in increased levels of deviant activities in Activeworlds. Perhaps, this may be true if individuals join Second Life to carry out activities that are not considered

⁸⁶See: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/woman-jailed-after-killing-virtual-husband-972457.html>; accessed 22/01/2009.

⁸⁷See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/oct/24/japan-games>; accessed 22/01/2009.

as conventional in the real world. However, Second Life may be seen as evolving into a homomorphic image of the real world. All kinds of activity, be it conventional or unconventional in the real world, can be found in Second Life. Many residents are tied to different kinds of material commitments, which could be considered as 'conventional activities' based on norms of the real world, such as building a community, engaging in economic activities and having a serious relationship. With these in mind, perhaps, the image of deviance in Second Life as portrayed by the media, may be a misleading one.

It is quite possible that residents who are engaged in various forms of conventional activities (based on the norms of the real world) are less likely to deviate in Second Life. Moreover, although most conventional activities in the real world have found their places in Second Life, social norms in the real world may not be the same as social norms in Second Life. Second Life may have its own conventional activities. Some of these may be considered as unconventional, even deviant in the real world. Some of Second Life's thousands of sub-communities are designed to carry out activities that are considered to be deviant in the larger context of Second Life, yet conventional in their local contexts. For example, walking around with no clothes on may be perceived as a conventional act in the sub-community *Sexy Beach*. However, if a resident takes a nude walk in an Orientation Island, he/she may be reported for exposing himself in a PG area.

Williams (2003) suggests that in Activeworlds, residents who are committed to a particular kind of activities have a reputation to lose, if they choose to deviate. Hence, new residents of Activeworlds are more likely to deviate (Williams 2003). Second Life has its in-world celebrities. They have spent much time, effort and money to reach their statuses in the community. Perhaps, they would think twice before deviating against established rules and norms in Second Life. On the other hand, residents who are famous via building deviant identities, being committed to their identities, may continue to deviate.

As discussed in Chapter Two,⁸⁸ individuals participate in Second Life for different reasons. Some consider it a place of refuge to retreat from the modern world; others perceive it as a creative medium to pursue some new experiences that could not be achieved in the real world. However, no matter the retreat or pursuit, a resident needs to invest a significant amount of time and effort to learn new technical skills, build and sustain relationships, so as to make their lives in Second Life meaningful. This effectively means, unless an individual joins Second Life to deviate intentionally, or is completely unaware of norms in this cybercommunity at large, he/she would have very little time to perform deviant acts.

⁸⁸See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

Belief

The concept of belief refers to one's belief in the common values, norms and laws of society. Although the concept gives little attention to the notion of deviant subculture, it does discuss about different extents to which people believe they should follow the rules of society. As demonstrated in the previous discussions, there may potentially be variations in belief concerning the validity of globalised norms and rules in Second Life. Moreover, there may also be the possibility of residents accepting these norms and rules and, at the same time, regarding them as irrelevant to their activities.

Social bonding theory assumes that a deviant individual while committing a deviant act still believes the act is wrong. This assumption is explained in two different ways. The first approach regards beliefs as sheer words with little practical value. The second approach depends on a deviant individual rationalising his/her behaviour so that he/she can commit the act and still believe in the wrong nature of it concurrently. Sykes and Matza (1957) name this process as *techniques of neutralisation*.

Williams (2003) suggests that many characteristics of cybercommunities, such as anonymity, a sense of physical detachment and transience may result in a neutralising effect on risk and risk taking in cybercommunities. Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralisation may be able to explain how some characteristics of cybercommunities allow individuals to drift into deviant activities while still maintaining a positive self-image (Williams 2003). For example, a perpetrator is able to use rationalisations to deny responsibility and injury, such as "it's only words" and "there is no physical harm". For another example, the perpetrator may also deny responsibility by denying the existence of a victim with rationalisations, such as "this isn't real" and "no one really get hurt". These suggestions coincide with the previous suggestion that the reasons behind an individual's participation in Second Life may influence his/her behaviour. An individual who participates in Second Life to play computer games is more likely to use these techniques of neutralisation than another individual who participates in Second Life to make friends. The method of condemnation of the condemners is heavily adopted by the vigilante groups in Second Life. For example, there are active condemnations of Linden Lab as a regulatory body in Second Life.

Moreover, members of these vigilante groups, as well as, residents of sims which are built for activities that may be considered as deviant by the larger Second Life community, may rationalise their activities by pledging loyalty to their group norms or localised norms. Furthermore, the extent that a resident connects with his/her avatar may play an important role in his/her techniques of neutralisation. For example, if a resident only considers his/her avatar as an isolated self instead of his/her componential self, it would

potentially be rather convenient for him/her to neutralise his/her deviant behaviours in Second Life.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has tried to serve empirical, methodological and theoretical purposes. Empirically, it has provided a vivid description of Second Life, in terms of its social characteristics and technological infrastructure. Although specific to Second Life, the social characteristics just as the technical features are relevant to cybercommunities in general.

Methodologically, it has highlighted the importance of the participant observation. Although there are similarities between Second Life and some communities in the real world, Second Life has many unique characteristics. Without a substantial period of observation, further research methods formulated might not be suitable in the environment.

Theoretically, field work has allowed for the identification of four main social imperatives, namely: norm, power, self-identity and conformity. These imperatives are used to facilitate the design of the questionnaires used in the next stages of empirical work. In the next chapter, these four themes alongside Giddens' theories of modernity are recalibrated in the light of data collected, providing a structured account of deviance in Second Life.

Chapter 5

Understanding Deviance in Second Life

In this final chapter, the analysis moves towards a structured account of deviance in Second Life evidenced by data collected. Giddens' (1991 & 1990) theories of modernity and the four main theoretical themes of norm, power, self-identity and conformity, are recalibrated in the light of data collected, leading to an in-depth understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life. It is contended that the nature of deviance in Second Life could be better understood when correlated with the accelerating social and technological developments associated with the conditions of modernity.

This thesis seeks to understand the nature of deviance in the cybercommunity of Second Life by examining its relationship with the modern world. Second Life is selected because it is created to replicate and reflect the real world. Second Life features many contemporary societies and cultures. Activities in Second Life are linked to activities in the real world in such a way that events in Second Life may be shaped by happenings in the real world and vice versa. Research on the nature of deviance in Second Life by examining how the real world projects onto Second Life and subsequently, how Second Life projects back onto the real world, would contribute to a better understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life. Conversely, it is also expected that the research should lead to some understandings of deviance in the modern world.

- “Second Life by itself is a blank page. Nothing more. Socially? Of course. We have explore in these posts everything from crime to perversion to education to business and general socialism. In this way it most certainly reflects real life. You could attach a label to Second Life as being a platform for perverts, but much, much worse happens in Real Life. Usually the label is attached by uninformed journalists who have had a bad experience with a Second Life prostitute anyway. Second Life, is only as good as its people. First Life is only as good as its people. In this way the two are the same. You get perverts and criminals in SL and you get perverts and criminals in RL. But let us not forget that also in both worlds we get builders, designers, artists, musicians,

visionaries, professors, teachers, police (Linden Labs G-Team), your average joe on the street, entrepreneurs, politicians, businessmen and women, psychologists, mediums, the list goes on and on. . .”

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

This thesis asserts that there is a reflexive relationship between Second Life and the real world, and uses Giddens’ structure of the real world as a framework and methodological guide to analyse this relationship. However, although under the conditions of modernity, global and local events are increasingly linked, they are not linked in a simple, uniform or unidirectional manner — henceforth, their impact on different nation states and communities is highly differentiated (Giddens 1990). Consequently, the nature of deviance in Second Life is neither representative nor necessarily typical of the nature of deviance in the modern world, only that it illuminates one such manifestation of a set of wider developments which have a broader currency.

This chapter considers deviance in Second Life through an analysis of some current debates about the increased levels of deviance in cybercommunities (e.g., Williams 2006a). As discussed in Chapter One,¹ Second Life may be considered as a natural ground where deviant activities manifest because of three main reasons: (i) Second Life is constituted by thousands of user-defined sub-communities with their own purposes and norms, resulting in a situation where every action is potentially deviant to some individuals; (ii) since nobody actually lives in Second Life, no one can be physically hurt by deviant activities, or punished for performing deviant activities in Second Life, leading to a more relaxed attitude towards deviance; and (iii) anonymity, one of the fundamental attractions of Second Life, is associated with disinhibited and deviant activity. These three reasons are discussed in detail in this chapter.

This chapter combines Giddens’ theories of modernity and the four main theoretical themes with empirical data to present a coherent account of deviance in Second Life. This account is a product of a continuing dialogue between theory and empirical work, which the research methodology sets out to achieve. As discussed in Chapter Three,² Giddens’ theories of modernity are used selectively and with appropriate sensitivity to the overall discussion of deviance in Second Life. This use of Giddens’ theories is to help structure the ideas in this section. The recalibration process, therefore, is inherently selective for it leads to a revised view of the theoretical notions, in which certain concepts become more prominent. In short, this chapter is reflexively constructed based on issues discussed in the previous chapters, the data collected and the researcher’s revised

¹See: Section 1.1 (*Understanding the thesis*).

²See: Section 3.1.2 (*The research process: adaptive theorising*).

knowledge of the subject area in the light of incoming information.

The central argument of this chapter is — the deviance in cybercommunities may not necessarily mean any ‘real’ deviance in these contexts, but reflects some wider social anxieties born out of, and associated with, the conditions of modernity. Throughout the chapter, this argument is presented by examining how various characteristics of modernity are amplified in Second Life, and how the amplification of these characteristics influence individuals’ perception of and reaction to deviance.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Each of these sections is centred around one of those four main theoretical themes, presents an aspect of the account of deviance in Second Life. Although each of these four aspects has its independent dynamics, they are inter-dependent of one another. This inter-dependence is reflected by the fact that the discussion centred around each of these four main theoretical themes would naturally cross over to the other themes.

In the first section, the discussion of norm begins with a brief account of current research on deviance in cybercommunities. Current research on deviance in cybercommunities seems to suggest that the difficulty in maintaining individuals’ bonds to community brought about by increased population, has partly resulted in deviant activities in some cybercommunities (Williams 2006a). In the first part of this section, the data on the motivation behind individuals’ participation in Second Life is discussed. The data demonstrates that to bond with other individuals is one of the primary reasons behind individuals’ participation in Second Life. For example, “I can meet and be friends with like-minded people” is the second on the list, when the 39 motivations are listed in a descending order based on their means scores (see: Appendix 4). This discovery is in contrast to the current understanding of deviance in cybercommunities.

The data also demonstrates that modernity related motivations have a stronger influence on individuals’ participation in Second Life (see: Appendix 9, figure 1). This discovery supports the use of theories of modernity to analyse deviance in Second Life. In the second part of this section, the data on individuals’ perception of deviance demonstrates that individuals’ perception of deviance in Second Life is intimately associated with the multiple systems of values in Second Life. The multiple systems of values may result in a context where every act is potentially deviant to some individuals.

In the second section, the discussion is shaped by the notion of power. It focuses on explaining the intimate association between the cybercommunity Second Life and the conditions of modernity. Besides facilitating a better understanding of deviance in Second Life, this intimate association also highlights the analytical power of this thesis.

Second Life is perceived by some individuals as an environment where they are empowered to do things that they cannot do in the real world. Consequently, it is natural to think of Second Life as an environment where behaviour is less inhibited. However, the data on individuals' experience and performance of deviance in Second Life does not present Second Life as an environment where deviant activities manifest frequently. In fact, the data is suggestive of an environment where the frequency of deviance is rather low (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). Some fundamental notions in Giddens' conditions of modernity and their intimate associations with Second Life are explained, providing a possible interpretation of this empirical data.

The previous two sections suggest that there may not be a significant amount of 'real' deviance in Second Life. However, this does not diminish the seriousness of deviance in Second Life as a social problem. In the third section, the discussion is centred around the notion of self-identity. It focuses on explaining the association between an individual participant in Second Life and the conditions of modernity. The first part of this section initiates the discussion with the popular perception that anonymity in Second Life leads to disinhibited activities. It then challenges the idea that identities in Second Life are truly anonymised by providing a different understanding of identities in Second Life. The second part of this section explains how Giddens' notion of reflexivity is able to justify that deviance in Second Life has personal and social harm in the broader context of the real world. Moreover, a thorough analysis of the notion of reflexivity provides a unique appreciation of the popular perception that Second Life is a context where deviant activities manifest frequently.

The last section is centred around the notion of conformity. Following the discovery that Second Life is a community where deviance does not manifest frequently, this section explores why individuals obey the norms and rules in Second Life. The exploration is divided into two themes, namely, bond and control. The theme of bond addresses the emotional bonds between individuals and the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, individuals in Second Life. The theme of control evolves around the technologies of control that are at work in Second Life. Many issues in the previous sections, are re-addressed in this section to reveal their relevance for criminology. This section, therefore, serves also as a summary and a bringing together of the main themes of this chapter.

5.1 Norm

Deviance does not exist: "Only acts exist, acts often given different meanings within various social frameworks" (Christie 2004, p. 3). In a particular social context, "Deviance is defined as violations of norms, or departures from social expectations" (Lemert

1972, p. 13). Like acts, “norms are not, they become”, which means that social norms are “shaped, re-shaped and kept alive through a long and complicated process of interaction” (Christie 2004, p. 3). Giddens defines deviance in terms of control. He wrote: “‘Deviance’ came to be ‘invented’ as part of the internally referential systems of modernity, and therefore defined in terms of control” (Giddens 1991, p. 160).

In the real world, individuals make sense of social interactions with some shared views of the institutional orders involved, such as the criminal law and the criminal justice system (Braithwaite 1989). The criminal law and the criminal justice system are ‘real’, because numberless individuals accept them as real and reproduce them through social actions (Braithwaite 1989). Giddens wrote: “the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system production” (Giddens 1984, p. 19). Social structures are, therefore, both a resource for actors to make sense of their action and a product of that action — social structure is reproduced as an objective reality that partially constrains the very kinds of actions which constitute it (Giddens 1984). For Giddens a shared understanding of a rule of social life enables individuals to proceed in an established and routine way. One way Giddens defines structures and rules is in terms of what he calls the ‘binding’ of time and space. This means social rules and norms are implicit procedures, the ‘know-how’ of carrying on in established ways, which can be applied in a range of different contexts.

Following these, social order depends upon the procedures of individuals in Second Life doing much the same kind of activities and a newcomer carrying on in much the same way when he/she enters Second Life. These procedures are enabled by structure, in terms of some taken-for-granted knowledge of how to proceed. For Giddens *structures binding time and space* means that these structures enable the procedures to continue over shorter or longer periods of time and across smaller or larger expanses of space. Indeed, rules and norms contribute to the maintenance of the fabric of everyday life. They relate to the constitution of meaning and the sanctioning of conduct.

A discussion of deviance in Second Life around the notion of norm provides some insights into how deviance is defined and understood in Second Life. Williams wrote: “The fragmentation of online community and the dissolution felt by many of its members form the central argument of an aetiology of online deviant behaviour” (Williams 2006a, p. 71). Actually, although the discussion in Chapter Two³ focuses on the positive depictions of cybercommunity, it still presents the discontinuity of opinion concerning the plausibility of maintaining any form of community in cyberspace. Williams suggests that some cybercommunities are “increasingly populated ‘dystopic’ environments” that

³See: Section 2.1.1 (*On cybercommunity*).

“form a breeding ground for deviant and antisocial behaviours” (Williams 2006a, p. 71). Williams further illustrates that in these cybercommunities, individuals “begin to feel abstracted from structures and activities as the user base increases, and as a result bonds to community are more difficult to maintain” (Williams 2006a, p. 71).

With more than 15 million created accounts,⁴ is Second Life heading toward a dystopia? Perhaps, Second Life can be interpreted as a natural ground for deviant activities. However, this interpretation may not be a result of any changes in the real deviance rate due to the difficulty in maintaining individuals’ bond to the cybercommunity Second Life. In fact, “the fragmentation of online community” that Williams (2006a, p. 71) discusses, is one of the primary characteristics of Second Life. Second Life is constituted by thousands of user-defined sub-communities and each of which may have a unique social theme. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Two,⁵ individuals in Second Life come from different social and cultural backgrounds, and participate in Second Life for different reasons. Following these, different individuals in Second Life may have different values and may be committed to their own values. Consequently, a perfectly appropriate act to an individual may be deviant to another:

- “You’re going to have to define what deviance is — basically narrow down what it is you’re looking for. As you have it right now, it’s too broad. What you take the entirety of SL as a whole, what may be considered deviant to one will be considered normal to another. In the end, nothing is really deviant when applied to SL in its entirety”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

5.1.1 The motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life

As discussed in Chapter Three,⁶ in the first questionnaire the individuals are asked to provide information about the extent to which they are motivated by each of 39 motivations (see: Appendix 4), by selecting one of the five response categories between 1 to 5.⁷ The data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life demonstrates that when the 39 motivations are listed in a descending order based on their mean scores, three out of the top five motivations are concerned with bonding with other individuals: “I can meet and be friends with like-minded people” is the second on the list, “I can enjoy general social interactions” is the fourth on the list and “I can have

⁴See: http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php; accessed 13/10/2008.

⁵See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

⁶See: Section 3.2.2 (*Questionnaire: self-completion*).

⁷1 = Not at all (motivated), 2 = Not very much (motivated), 3 = A bit (motivated), 4 = Quite a lot (motivated), 5 = Very much (motivated).

a hobby shared with my friends” is the fifth on the list (see: Appendix 4). Moreover, being able to belong to a community, and help build a community are also among the top 16 on the list: “I can belong to a community” is the 13th on the list and “I can help to build a community” is the 16th on the list (see: Appendix 4). On the contrary, motivations that may be associated with, or could potentially lead to, deviant behaviour are among the bottom ten on the list, such as having no responsibilities, enjoying ‘risky’ activities and doing lots of things without worrying about the consequences (see: Appendix 4).

The data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life⁸ demonstrates that the category of community related motivations has the second highest mean score⁹ among the five categories of motivations (see: Appendix 9, figure 1). Moreover, the paired samples test table¹⁰ shows significant results, which demonstrate that from a point of statistical significance, the individuals are more motivated by the category of community related motivations than the category of commerce related ones, as well as, the category of leisure related ones (see: Appendix 9, figure 3). The difference between the categories of community and self-identity related motivations is not statistically significant (see: Appendix 9, figure 3). This means that from the point of statistical significance, the individuals are not more motivated by the category of community related motivations than the category of self-identity related ones.

The data and discoveries imply that there may not be much difficulty in maintaining bonds between individuals and the cybercommunity Second Life. More importantly, the data suggests that to be deviant is not one of the main reasons behind individuals’ participation in Second Life. Actually, one of the main reasons behind individuals’ participation in Second Life is to bond with others, to form communities. As this chapter progresses, there appear to be clear associations between the category of community related motivations and the nature of deviance in Second Life, which is discussed in Section 5.4 (*Conformity*). However, in a social world, matters cannot be clear cut. Therefore, a discussion of the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life is necessary in the analysis of the nature of deviance in Second Life, since the nature of deviance

⁸In this chapter, only narratives of the data is presented. The data that supports the narratives can be found in Appendix 9.

⁹Each category of motivations has a mean score. This score is the average score of all scores given by the survey participants.

¹⁰A ‘paired samples t test’ compares the means of two variables. In this case, the individuals’ scores of the categories of modernity and community related motivations. It computes the difference between every one of the individuals’ scores of the two categories of motivations and tests to see if the average difference is significantly different from zero. A ‘paired samples t test’ produces three different tables: (i) ‘paired samples statistics’; (ii) ‘paired samples correlations’; and (iii) ‘paired samples test’. The first table details the descriptive statistics. The second table shows the Pearson correlation coefficient. The third table is the ‘paired samples test’ table.

in any context is intimately related to the sociology of the context itself.

In this thesis, the investigation of the sociology of Second Life begins with the question — why do individuals participate in Second Life?. As discussed in Chapter Three,¹¹ this question then translates into 39 motivations (see: Appendix 4) in the first questionnaire: *Opinion survey of resident on the nature of deviance in Second Life*. These 39 motivations are grouped into five categories for analytical purposes (see: Appendix 9, figure 1):

1. Modernity (M = 3.53)
2. Community (M = 3.23)
3. Self-identity (M = 3.06)
4. Commerce (M = 2.72)
5. Leisure (M = 2.75)

As discussed in Chapter Two,¹² individuals participate in Second Life for different reasons. They may choose to participate in Second Life, because compared to other social life worlds, it can provide them with a more extreme experience of some characteristics of the modern world, such as multiplicity, instant access, community building, self representation and creation. These features are closely related to Giddens' conditions of modernity and can be observed in the categories of modernity, community and self identity related motivations, such as "I can have many choices of things to do", "I can belong to a community", "I can be known as whom I truly am" (see: Appendix 9, figure 4,6,8). The intimate relationship between these motivations and Giddens' conditions of modernity is gradually explained as this chapter progresses. The other motivations are concerned with some opportunities and activities that Second Life can provide for individuals, i.e., commercial and leisure related reasons (see: Appendix 9, figure 10 & 12). The extracts below illustrate how Second Life provides individuals with the opportunity to live beyond the boundaries of the real world:

- "In real life I have to force myself to visit the dentist... let alone undergo elective surgery. In SL I change my species multiple times in the course of a simple conversation".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

- "I certainly do not live in such a lavish home in Real Life as I do in Second Life".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

¹¹See: Section 3.2.2 (*Questionnaire: self-completion*).

¹²See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

- “I think the first thing to remember is that Second Life was started by Philip Rosendale because of his love for Virtual Worlds as a kid. He wanted to create a place that would in many way reflect real life, but also go beyond the boundaries of what one can achieve in Real Life (Flying without need for a plane, for example)”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 6, 2009)

In spite of some general perceptions of Second Life as a gaming ground for leisure, the data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life demonstrates that on average, the individuals are less motivated by the category of leisure related motivations than the categories of modernity, community and self-identity related ones, respectively (see: Appendix 9, figure 1). On average, the participants are the least motivated by the category of commerce related motivations (see: Appendix 9, figure 1), despite the huge amount of commercial transactions taking place in Second Life on a daily basis.¹³ However, although the mean score of the category of self-identity related motivations is higher than the mean score of the category of commerce related ones (see: Appendix 9, figure 1), an insignificant result in the paired samples test table shows that from a point of statistical significance, the participants are not more motivated by the category of self-identity related motivations than the category of commerce related ones (see: Appendix 9, figure 3). Moreover, an insignificant result in the paired samples test table demonstrates that from the point of statistical significance, the participants are not more motivated by the category of leisure related motivations than the category of commerce related ones (see: Appendix 9, figure 3).

In both categories of commerce and leisure related motivations, the highest percentage of the participants (mode) are not at all motivated by these two categories of motivations (see: Appendix 9, figure 2). On the contrary, in both categories of modernity and community related motivations, the highest percentage of the participants (mode) are quite a lot motivated by these two categories of motivations (see: Appendix 9, figure 2). The category of self-identity related motivations has an evenly distributed percentage (around 20%) of participants choosing each of the five response categories (see: Appendix 9, figure 2). This suggests that the category of self-identity related motivations is more controversial than any other category of motivations. Different participants tend to have different opinions towards motivations within this category. This is discussed in more detail later in Section 5.3 (*Self-identity*).

On average, the participants are the most motivated by the category of modernity related motivations (see: Appendix 9, figure 1). Moreover, statistically significant results in the paired samples test table show that the difference between the mean scores of the

¹³See: http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php; accessed 13/10/2008.

category of modernity related motivations and any other category of motivations with a lower mean score, is statistically significant (see: Appendix 9, figure 3). This means that from the point of statistical significance, the participants are the most motivated by the category of modernity related motivations.

The motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life are only briefly accounted for in this section. The relevance of these motivations to the understanding of deviance in Second Life is revealed as the chapter progresses.

5.1.2 The nature of deviance in Second Life

As discussed in Chapter Three,¹⁴ in the first questionnaire the participants are asked to provide information about their perception of each of the 91 acts in the standard list by selecting one of the five response categories numbered 1 to 5.¹⁵ To provide an understanding of participants' perception of deviance, the 91 acts in the standard list are ranked for degree of deviance based on their mean scores (see: Appendix 1). Acts that are at, or near, the top of the list — highly deviant — are technology-related and may only be carried out by individuals with a certain level of advanced technical skill. Some of these acts are (see: Appendix 1):

- “Using programs to take over another avatar” is the 1st on the list.
- “Using programs to change another avatar’s property” is the 2nd on the list.
- “Sending a virus to another avatar’s ‘Give item’ box” is the 3rd on the list.
- “Using Programs to change another avatar” is the 4th on the list.
- “Logging into another avatar’s account uninvited” is the 5th on the list.
- “Manipulating the contents of another avatar’s account uninvited” is the 6th on the list.
- “Using programs to take over another avatar’s property” is the 7th on the list.
- “Using programs to vandalise community property” is the 8th on the list.

After these, there are acts that are child-related. Some of these acts are (see: Appendix 1):

- “Exchanging child related pornographic material” is the 9th on the list.

¹⁴See: Section 3.2.2 (*Questionnaire: self-completion*).

¹⁵1 = Not at all (deviant), 2 = Slightly (deviant), 3 = Certainly (deviant), 4 = Very (deviant), 5 = Don't know.

- “Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life” is the 10th on the list.
- “An adult using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes” is the 12th on the list.

Then, there are acts that damage Second Life as a community. Some of these acts are (see: Appendix 1):

- “Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance” is the 13th on the list.
- “Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole” is the 14th on the list.
- “Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials” is the 17th on the list.
- “Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars” is the 20th on the list.

These are followed by many acts that could potentially be included in the *Big Six* and other established institutional and local norms in Second Life, as well as, many text and graphic related acts. A few of these acts are (see: Appendix 1):

- “Revealing the real life identity of another avatar” is the 23rd on the list.
- “Not respecting another avatar’s race or ethnicity” is the 24th on the list.
- “Not respecting another avatar’s gender” is the 25th on the list.
- “Making unwelcome sexual advances to another avatar” is the 26th on the list.
- “Sending harassing IM to another avatar” is the 27th on the list.
- “Posting chat logs without any consent of the avatars involved” is the 28th on the list.

Lastly, there are acts that can be considered as more extreme expressions of many liberal ideas that already exist in the real world (see: Appendix 1):

- “A married individual marrying another avatar in Second Life” is the 77th on the list.
- “A male using a female avatar” is the 79th on the list.
- “Using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar” is the 80th on the list.
- “A female using a male avatar” is the 81st on the list.

- “Exchanging pornographic material” is the 82nd on the list.
- “Using a nude avatar” is the 83rd on the list.
- “Carrying weapon in Second life” is the 88th on the list.
- “Having intimate relationship with several avatars” is the 89th on the list.

When the 91 acts are grouped into eight categories for analytical purposes, the category of acts that damage the cybercommunity Second Life has the highest mean score (see: Appendix 9, figure 14):

1. Acts that damage Second Life community (M = 3.10)
2. Acts against an avatar’s property (M = 2.92)
3. Acts against the avatar (M = 2.56)
4. Acts that are performed via text & graphic (M = 2.44)
5. Acts against real world norms (M = 2.20)
6. Acts that are carried out by powerful groups (M = 2.10)
7. Acts against Second Life community norms (M = 2.00)
8. Acts against an avatar’s identity & privacy (M = 1.85)

This suggests a strong bond between individual participants and the cybercommunity Second Life. It is clear that individual participants are aware of the co-dependent relationship between individuals and the community Second Life. The category of avatar property related acts has a slightly lower mean score than the category of acts against the community Second Life (see: Appendix 9, figure 14). These two categories of acts have relatively higher mean scores than the other categories of acts. An insignificant result in the paired samples test table demonstrates that there is no statistically significant difference between the participants’ perceptions of the categories of community damage and avatar’s property related acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 16). However, six significant results in the paired samples test table demonstrate that when compared with any other category of acts with a lower mean score, from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider the category of community damage related acts as more deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 16). Moreover, six significant results in the paired samples test table demonstrate that when compared with any categories of acts with a lower mean score, from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider the category of avatar’s property related acts as more deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 16).

The category of avatar related acts has the third highest mean score among the eight categories of acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 14). Although the category of avatar related acts has a slightly higher mean score than the category of text & graphic related acts,

a statistically insignificant result in the paired samples test table shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the participants' perceptions of these two categories of acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 16). However, four significant results in the paired samples test table demonstrate that when compared with any other category of acts with a lower mean score, from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider the category of avatar related acts as more deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 16). Moreover, four significant results in the paired samples test table demonstrate that when compared with any category of acts having a lower mean score, from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider the category of text & graphic related acts as more deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 16).

The difference between the mean scores of the categories of real world norms and powerful groups related acts is very slight (see: Appendix 9, figure 14). Moreover, an insignificant result in the paired samples test table shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the participants' perceptions of these two categories of acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 16). However, two significant results in the paired samples test table demonstrate that when compared with any of the remaining two categories of acts with a lower mean score (SL community norms and avatar's identity & privacy), from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider the category of real world norms related acts as more deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 16). The data and discoveries suggest that Second Life is not separated from the real world. More importantly, on average, real world norms are more important to the participants than Second Life norms. Although there are slight differences among the mean scores of the remaining three categories of acts (powerful groups, SL community norms and avatar's identity & privacy), three insignificant results in the paired samples test table demonstrate that there is no statistically significant differences among the participants' perceptions of these three categories of acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 16).

These three statistically insignificant results suggest that Second Life is a context where multiple systems of values are at work. The data on the strength of feeling the participants have for each of the categories of acts demonstrates that even in the least controversial case there are conflicts in the participants' opinions (see: Appendix 9, figure 15). Although 54.9% of the participants consider the category of acts that damage the cybercommunity Second Life as very deviant, 8.11% of them still think of it as not at all deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 15). Similarly, although 55.51% of the participants consider the category of avatar's property related acts as very deviant, 15.27% of them still think of it as not at all deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 15). The most controversial case is the category of real world norms related acts: 29.6% of the participants consider this category of acts as very deviant, whereas 35.1% of them think of it as not at all

deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 15).

The data corresponds with the previous suggestion that Second Life can be seen as a context where different individuals are committed to different values. Therefore, there are conflicts in individuals' perceptions of deviance in Second Life. These conflicts reflect a questioning of established beliefs and certainties. For Giddens (1990) this questioning is one of the fundamental characteristics of modernity. This questioning is brought about by a plurality of social worlds and precepts in the modern world and may result in an environment where the deviant is everywhere (Young 1999). Second Life can be seen as a context that typifies this plurality of social worlds and precepts. In Second Life, there might be several different systems of norms — institutional norms, local norms, sub-cultural norms and notions of deviance.¹⁶ These four different systems blur, overlap and cross over, resulting in a highly fragmented environment, in which every participant is a potential deviant.

The pluralism of value in Second Life is demonstrated by the data on participants' perceptions of some acts that are related to norms in Second Life and the real world. As discussed in Chapter One,¹⁷ in Presdee's (2000) 'carnival of crime' thesis, he suggests that much of crime occurring in society, especially that relating to social disorder, is a product of the fact that the existing political invasion of social life through social policies encourages individuals to live two lives. The first life is the 'official' life characterised by work and governed by imposed order. The second life is "the only true site for the expression of one's true feelings for life... where truth can be told against the cold hearted lies of rational, scientific modernity" (Presdee 2000, p. 8). This second life is "expressed through the world of excess, obscenity and degradation" (Presdee 2000, p. 8). Presdee interprets the Internet as "fast becoming the safe site of the second life of people" (Presdee 2000, p. 54). The extract below demonstrates the association between Presdee's idea and the nature of deviance in Second Life:

- "I prefer SL to be as free from norms and rules as possible. RL is becoming more and more rigid and categorized each day, everything has to be labelled. Beyond the general concept of treating everyone in SL with respect and decency, I prefer Live and Let Live. Except for willfully hurting someone, stealing, or anything that may violate the RL laws of the land, what you do in SL and who you do it with is none of my business".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

If Presdee's suggestion is true and Second Life is expressed through "excess, obscenity

¹⁶See: Chapter Four, Section 4.2.1 (*Norm*).

¹⁷See: Section 1.1 (*Understanding the thesis*).

and degradation” (Presdee 2000, p. 8), then it should be a place where behaviours that are normally considered as non-deviant are thought of as deviant. Below respondents give narratives of how the norms of the majority in Second Life have influence on the perception of deviance in the cybercommunity:

- “But if you joined “Deviant Life”, you’d therefore be deviant, which would in turn make you not deviant (because you’d be like everyone else there), which would mean you shouldn’t be there at all, because you’re not deviant. Alternatively, you could join “Deviant Life” and not be deviant, which would make you deviant, so you could stay. But you’d be boring as hell”.
- “Well, it depends whether we are defining deviance as behaviour which should not be allowed or as behaviour which deviates from the norm (whatever that is). To me, deviance means simply a change from the “norm” ”.
- “One thing to keep in mind that makes the SL environment drastically different than the RL environment is that we are all adults here (supposedly). Imagine how the fabric of society and social acceptability would change if everyone in the real world was an adult. I’d bet that part of the reason “amoral” (subjective) behavior is so heavily suppressed has to do with concerns over exposing a minor to it. Go to a sex shop or a strip club in RL. Does BDSM¹⁸ seem so taboo these? Not really. Many consenting adults go to strip clubs or sex shops and they aren’t typically seen as exceptionally deviant. It’s normal behavior for many adults. Go to a PTA meeting at your kid’s school and talk about BDSM? Yeah... probably a bit deviant. Deviance, by it’s very definition is simply a degree of separation between the norms of the majority around you”.
- “Deviance is a sloppy word, and can be emotionally overcharged. An example of what I’m talking about — and I hate to spell it out with this example — but I live (in real life) in a predominantly gay neighborhood. My husband and I have sometimes been in the sexual minority at parties and restaurants — I mean, the only heterosexuals in the room. Now, how do you think deviance is understood in my neighborhood”?
- “Well, the term ‘deviant’ is very much open to interpretation. I do not do anything in SL that I have not done or don’t do in RL, not counting the flying”.

(Forum correspondence from correspondents, March 5, 2009)

The data on participants’ perception of acts that are related to Second Life and real life norms seems to suggest that Second Life is not a community dominated by deviant sub-culture. If Second Life is “expressed through the world of excess, obscenity and degradation” (Presdee 2000, p. 8), then idealised behaviour would be considered as deviant in the community. However, the fact that “belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised” has the lowest mean score among the three acts below implies that there is a considerable number of participants who do not consider Second Life as an environment where deviance is the norm (see: Appendix 9, table 7). In fact, only 11.3% of the participants who consider “belonging to a community whose

¹⁸Bondage/discipline, domination, submission/sadism and masochism

behaviour would be largely idealised” as certainly or very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 23).

Moreover, three insignificant results in the paired samples test table show that there is no statistically significant differences among the participants’ perceptions of these three acts below (see: Appendix 9, figure 25):

1. “Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life” (M = 1.82)
2. “Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world” (M = 1.73)
3. “Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised” (M = 1.56)

The data and discoveries imply that Second Life is an environment where different systems of norms are at work, simultaneously. A significant result in the paired samples correlations table shows that the participants who give high scores to “belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world” would also give high scores to “belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life” (see: Appendix 9, figure 25). This discovery suggests that for some participants, there is no separation, or at least, no clear separation, between deviance in Second Life and deviance the real world. Actually, the participants may not perceive Second Life as being separated from the real world. This discovery implies that the normal disciplines by which individuals evaluate acts in the real world are still present in Second Life. Below respondents give narratives that demonstrate their perceptions of the relationship between Second Life and the real world and how this relationship shapes their understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life:

- “My views in SL are much the same as the RL. I may be more tolerant towards some behaviors in Second Life because I am constantly exposed to these”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

- “I do intentionally do things in Second Life that I know are clearly deviant in the physical world, but not out of any desire to push boundaries or test moral perceptions. Usually things that are easier because of the less judgmental and physically safer environment”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

- “In Second Life, people are just more open about what they already do in Real Life. It may seem SL is full of deviants, but not any more than RL is. They are just more visible and readily identifiable, as they do not have to worry about the very real discrimination and backlash people

with alternative lifestyles experience in Real Life. Of course, paradoxically that fact may indeed lead to more people with alternative lifestyles to come to SL :-).”

- “Second Life is designed to reflect the senses we experience already in our normal life, with exaggeration. It’s what we humans experiences for over thousands of years. Our wishes to become things we are not, and do things we currently cannot. Such as flying without an unnatural device, and casting magic without the proper exchange of required particles. The rules in Second Life are closely related to the laws of crowd control we already have. For those who cannot control their own desires, and need to be forced to keep the deviancy to a government controlled maximum. Such as sex with children, obscene nudity in places where it’s not allowed, and common sense, including respect to another being”.
- “Unavoidably Second Life DOES have its darker side. But in this way it reflects real life also. If you give people something in Real Life then a number of those people will undoubtedly try to ruin it or abuse it in some fashion. It is just part of the way some people are to constantly want to tear down that which is good for their own gratification. There will always be ‘Crime (griefing)’ in Second Life just as there will always be crime in First Life. But Second Life still does serve as a catalyst for ordinary people to go way beyond their bounds of reason and try something that would be considered even taboo in Real Life”.

(Forum correspondence from correspondents, March 6, 2009)

The data on the strength of feeling the participants have for acts that are related to Second Life community norms shows that 13.6% of the participants feel “not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership” is very deviant and the same percentage of the participants feel “not respecting local norms in ‘deviant’ sims” is very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 23). Moreover, an insignificant result in the paired samples test table shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the participants’ perceptions of these two acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 26). However, a significant result in a paired samples correlations table shows that the participants who give high scores to one of the acts would also give high scores to the other act (see: Appendix 9, figure 26). The data and discoveries suggest that 13.6% of the participants consider not respecting local/Group norm in Second Life as very deviant, irrespective of whether the local/Group norm is deviant. This result presents a community with diverse social norms and, more importantly, a respectful attitude towards alternative norms among the participants.

Moreover, significant results in the paired samples test table demonstrate that from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider the following five acts as more deviant if they are carried out in PG areas or Safe Areas (Appendix 9, figure 27):

1. “Using a nude avatar in a PG area” ($M = 2.81$) vs. “Using a nude avatar” ($M = 1.61$)

2. “Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area” (M = 2.71) vs. “Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar” (M = 1.30)
3. “Shooting another avatar in a Safe Area” (M = 3.02) vs. “Shooting another avatar” (M = 2.10)
4. “Carrying weapon in a Safe Area” (M = 2.38) vs. “Carrying weapon in Second Life” (M = 1.50)
5. “Pushing another avatar in a Safe Area” (M = 2.61) vs. “Pushing another avatar” (M = 2.14)

The data on participants’ perception of acts that are related to real world norms suggests that some participants do carry values in the real world to Second Life. In the real world, different legal jurisdictions tend to have different kinds of standards towards adult pornography. On the contrary, child pornography tends to be prohibited much more strictly across different jurisdictions. Among the category of real world norms related acts, “exchanging child related pornographic material” (M = 3.50) has the highest mean score, whereas “exchanging pornographic material” (M = 1.61) has the lowest mean score (see: Appendix 9, table 5). A significant result in the paired samples test table shows that the difference between the participants’ perceptions of these two acts is statistically significant (see: Appendix 9, figure 28). The data on the strength of feeling that the participants have for each of the acts demonstrates that 70.5% of the participants consider exchanging child related pornographic material as very deviant, whereas only 4.5% of them consider exchanging pornographic material as very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 21).

In fact, the participants seem to consider all acts that may bring harm to children and young adults as certainly deviant, irrespective of whether personal or social harm caused by these activities can be evaluated by normal disciplines. Despite the fact that “an adult using child-like avatar in a sexual act” does not have any criminal status in the real world, 45.5% of the participants still consider it as very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 21). Although “an adult using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes” has a higher mean score than “an adult using child-like avatar in a sexual act” (see: Appendix 9, table 5), an insignificant result in the paired samples test table shows that the participants’ perceptions of these two acts do not differ significantly (see: Appendix 9, figure 29). A significant result in the paired samples correlations table shows that the participants who give high scores to one of the two acts would also give high scores to the other act (see: Appendix 9, figure 29). There is also no statistically significant difference between the participants’ perceptions of “an adult using child-like avatar in a sexual act” and “using Second Life as a tool for communication

to organise activities that might be considered criminal” (see: Appendix 9, figure 29). An significant result in the paired samples correlations table shows that the participants who give high scores to one of the two acts would also give high scores to the other (see: Appendix 9, figure 29). In other cases, the normal disciplines by which individuals evaluate behaviours in the real world are displaced in Second Life. From the point of statistical significance, the participants consider not respecting another avatar’s race or ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation as more deviant than “to actually strike another avatar” (see: Appendix 9, figure 30). Perhaps, in an environment where ‘actual bodily harm’ no longer results in physical damage, individuals have a set of different priorities. The data and discoveries demonstrate that although some deviant acts in Second Life cannot be evaluated by normal disciplines, they are still considered as harmful. This is discussed in detail in Section 5.3 (*Self-identity*).

When Linden Lab’s institutional norms clash with Second Life culture, the participants’ perception of deviance tends to be more strongly influenced by Second Life culture. Although both “carrying out fraudulent deals” and “gambling” are prohibited by Linden Lab, from the point of statistical significance, the former act is more deviant than the latter (see: Appendix 9, figure 31). Perhaps, this is because gambling had been one of the most popular activities in Second Life, till Linden Lab put a ban on it on July 25, 2007. “Carrying out fraudulent deals” has a rather high mean score ($M = 3.43$, see: Appendix 9, table 20). Moreover, 61.4% of the participants consider it as very deviant and 20.5% of them consider it as certainly deviant (see: Appendix 9, table 21). This is partly due to the high level of economic activities in Second Life, and the exchangeability between currency in Second Life and currencies in the real world. This high level of economic activities in Second Life certainly brings benefit to big corporations, as well as, individuals and groups that enter Second Life for commercial purposes. However, as discussed previously, carrying out commercial activities is not the main reason behind individuals’ participation in second Life.¹⁹ Actually, only 15.4% of the participants in the sample group are very much motivated by the category of commerce related motivations (see: Appendix 9, figure 2). Perhaps, the rest of the participants do not want Second Life to be turned into a new platform for commercial activities. In fact, from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider “an individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes” as more deviant than “an individual or group that monopolises large spaces” (see: Appendix 9, figure 32).

Earlier discussions around the notion of norm in Chapter Four²⁰ show that Williams

¹⁹See: Section 5.1.1 (*The motions behind individuals’ participation in Second Life*).

²⁰See: Section 4.2.1 (*Norm*).

(2006a) has identified nine²¹ types of deviant activities in the cybercommunity Active-worlds. Most of these nine types of activities are also present in Second Life. Some of these types of acts have been discussed previously, including obscenity, sexual harassment and racial harassment. Some of these tend to be carried out via texts and graphics. The two acts that are related to the use of bad language (profanity) have mean scores above 2 (slightly deviant) (see: Appendix 9, table 4). Only 15.9% of the participants consider “writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards” as very deviant, whereas twice as many participants (31.8%) consider this act as not at all deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 20). Moreover, an insignificant result in the paired samples test table shows that there is no difference between the participants’ perceptions of these two acts. This discovery suggests that the participants give their scores to “bad language, i.e., swear words”, irrespective of where the bad language is displayed. The data and discovery correspond with the previous speculation in Chapter Four:²² participants in Second Life may not think of profanity related acts as seriously deviant, because in the main grid of Second Life, all participants are supposed to be 18 and over.

Compared with profanity, harassment related acts have higher mean scores (see: Appendix 9, table 4). Moreover, 38.6% of the participants consider “sending harassing IM to another avatar” as very deviant and 29.5% of the participants consider “writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards” as very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 20). Only 9.1% of the participants consider the former act as not at all deviant and 15.9% of the participants consider the latter act as not at all deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 20). A significant result in the paired samples test table shows that the participants consider sending a harassing IM to another avatar as more deviant than writing it on an in-world chat board (see: Appendix 9, figure 32).

In terms of flooding, 27.3% of the participants consider “dropping bulky information in another avatar’s ‘Give item’ box” as very deviant, and 18.2% of them consider “sending bulky IM to another avatar” as very deviant and the same percentage of them consider “writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards” as very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 20). An insignificant result in the paired samples test table shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the participants’ perceptions of the latter two acts. However, from the point of statistical significance, the participants do consider the former act as more deviant than any one of the latter two acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 32).

Concerning offensive image, 45.5% of the participants consider “sending offensive images

²¹1. profanity, 2. harassment, 3. flooding, 4. vandalism, 5. obscenity, 6. sexual harassment, 7. impersonating a peace keeper, 8. racial harassment, 9. unknown offence.

²²See: Section 4.2.1 (*Norm*).

to another avatar's 'Give item' box" as very deviant, whereas 18.2% of them consider "displaying offensive animations in Second Life" as very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 20). A significant result in the paired samples test table shows that from the point of statistical significance, the participants consider the former act as more deviant than the latter act (see: Appendix 9, figure 32).

These significant results demonstrate that for some profanity, flooding and offensive image related acts, the participants tend to rate acts that target at individual participants as more deviant than acts that are exposed to the general population of Second Life. This is suggestive of a difference in the level of threat between acts that are exposed to the general population of Second Life and acts that are targeted at a particular individual. This implies a strong bond between an individual and his/her Second Life avatar, which is discussed in detail in Section 5.3 (*Self-identity*).

As discussed in Chapter Four,²³ conventional acts, such as textual acts, are more likely to exist in conventional online environments, whereas acts such as vandalism and impersonation are products of specific cybercommunities (Williams 2006a). In this case, vandalism and impersonation are enabled by 3D community infrastructures and avatars in Second Life. Regarding vandalism, on average, the participants consider "using programs to vandalise community property" as certainly deviant ($M = 3.55$, see: Appendix 9, table 1). Moreover, 72.7% of the participants consider this act as very deviant, whereas only 9.1% of them consider this act as not at all deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 17). Regarding "impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity", 6.8% of the participants consider it as very deviant, 22.7% of them consider it as certainly deviant and 29.5% of them think of it as not at all deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 24). In the case of "impersonating another individual by having the same avatar as the individual", only 36.4% of the participants have scored this act: half of them think of it as not at all deviant and the other half think of it as slightly deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 24). Perhaps, since many residents use default avatars in Second Life, the idea that having the same avatar as another person is a form of impersonation, may be difficult for some participants to understand. Unlike ordinary residents, Second Life celebrities are more likely to have uniquely designed avatars and these avatars may be quite well-known. Consequently, a better response rate is obtained.

From the most deviant act to the least in the standard list, there are always conflicts in the participants' perceptions of deviance. Although "using programs to take over another avatar" has the highest mean score among the 91 acts in the standard list (see: Appendix 1) and 72.7% of the participants consider this act as very deviant, 4.5% of

²³See: Section 4.2.1 (*Norm*).

them still think of it as not at all deviant and 13.6% of them have selected the response category of “don’t know” (see: Appendix 9, figure 19). Although 77.3% of the participants consider “sending a virus to another avatar’s ‘Give item’ box” as very deviant, 9.1% of them still think of it as not at all deviant, the same proportion of them have selected the response category of “don’t know” (see: Appendix 9, figure 18). At the other end of the list, “engaging in sexual activity with another avatar” has the lowest the mean score among the 91 acts in the standard list (see: Appendix 1) and 70.5% of the participants consider this act as not as all deviant, 2.3% of them still think of it as very deviant and the same proportion of them think of it as certainly deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 21). Moreover, despite the fact that instead of a human ethnic group, the Furry is the most populated group in Second Life (Rymaszewski et al. 2007), 11.4% of participants still consider “using a non-human avatar” as very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 24). Furthermore, 9.1% of the participants consider “a male using a female avatar” as very deviant and 6.8% of the participants consider “a female using a male avatar” as very deviant (see: Appendix 9, figure 24).

The data on participants’ perception of deviance suggests a pluralism of value towards what is deviant in Second Life. For Young pluralism of value has considerable effect on individuals’ “perception of and reaction to deviance” (Young 1999, p. 15). In the modern world, this pluralism of value is seen to be closely related to “the diversification of life style”, “the close integration of society” and “the immigration of people” from different parts of the world (Young 1999, p. 15). These three characteristics are exemplified in Second Life. Second Life is a cybercommunity made up by thousands of sub-communities with different social themes and life styles. The teleportation system enables residents to travel from one sub-community to another within a matter of seconds. Moreover, residents in Second Life come from different parts of the world and may have dissimilar views about what is deviant. Consequently, by Young’s (1999) argument, Second Life may be perceived as a social context where deviant activities manifest frequently.

5.2 Power

Giddens does not define ‘power’ in his theories of modernity, he elaborates it in terms of *differential power*: “Some individuals or groups are more readily able to appropriate specialised knowledge than others” (Giddens 1990, p. 54). Giddens wrote: “The appropriation of knowledge does not happen in a homogeneous fashion, but is often differentially available to those in power positions, who are able to place it in the service of sectional interests” (Giddens 1990, p. 44). Giddens uses the notion of differential power

as one of four²⁴ factors that contradicts the thesis — “more knowledge about social life (even if that knowledge is as well buttressed empirically as it could possibly be) equals greater control over our fate” (Giddens 1990, pp. 43-45).

Differential power is able to explain the existence of different social classes and power struggles between these classes. In criminology, the notion of power is central to labelling theories and critical criminology. The essence of labelling theories can be expressed by the passage: “Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. . . . the deviant is one to whom the label has been successfully applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label” (Becker 1963, p. 4). The central agenda of critical criminologists is to define crime in terms of social oppression: deviance is associated with “a social context that is structurally determined by the general allocation of societal resources and by the specific nature of police intervention in the lives of its citizens” (Burke 2005, p. 173). Critical criminology deals with both crimes of the powerful and crimes of the powerless. Powerful individuals commit crime because of pressures associated with the securing and maintenance of the state and corporate interests in the context of global capitalism. Criminal behaviour of the powerless is brought about by the interaction between the marginalisation or exclusion from access to mainstream, institutions and that of criminalisation by the state authorities.

Although one of the primary attractions of Second Life is its non-hierarchical social structures, social distinctions between the powerful and powerless also exist in Second Life. In Chapter Four,²⁵ the power struggles between an individual and a corporation, an individual and a community, as well as, an ordinary resident and a Second Life elite, are discussed. The data from this research suggests that in order to understand the nature of deviance in Second Life, the notion of power needs to be understood in terms of the relationship between Second Life and the modern world. In the first part of this section, the data on participants’ experience and performance of deviance is discussed. In contrast to popular perception, the data does not present Second Life as an environment where deviant activities manifest frequently (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). In the second part of this section, some fundamental notions in Giddens’ conditions of modernity, such as *time-space distanciation*, abstract systems of disembedding and reembedding, *trust* and *risk*, are used to explain this manifestation of deviance in Second Life.

²⁴1. differential power, 2. the role of values, 3. the impact of unintended consequence, 4. the reflexivity of modernity.

²⁵See: Section 4.2.2 (*Power*).

5.2.1 The frequency of deviance in Second Life

Some writings on cyberspace tend to distinguish cyberspace from the real world and describe cyberspace as a place where any individual could express his/her beliefs without fear of being forced into silence or conformity (e.g., Barlow 1996). The idea that governments of the real world should not have power in cyberspace is central to Barlow (1996), as discussed in Chapter Two.²⁶ Below respondents describe how this description of cybercommunities shapes individuals' perception of deviance in Second Life:

- "It is hard to define deviance in a place where the motto is "Your World, Your Imagination".
- "To a great extent, I am free to do whatever I want in Second Life, but it is still subject to certain community and financial pressures".
- "My behaviour is less inhibited in SL than RL. There are very few consequences in SL. You can do things that are hindered by RL physical, social, and economic constraints. SL encourages fantasy. Whether those fantasies are deviant is subjective".
- "Overall there is a much more relaxed attitude to what is commonly thought of as deviancy than RL. This has shaped my perception, to the degree that I find such things less shocking, purely because of my exposure to them. I'd still be surprised to see them in RL".
- "Finding oneself in a world where the impossible is suddenly possible combined with the anonymity of hiding behind a 3D model that is essentially 'you' in that world, I find that it rather sets people's minds to thinking about all of the things they would never dream of trying in First Life".

(Forum correspondence from correspondents, March 4, 2009)

These narratives portray Second Life as an environment where there is less control and constraint. More importantly, these respondents seem to give the impression that they feel empowered in Second Life. The motto of Second Life: "Your World, Your Imagination" could be interpreted as a form of empowerment. Moreover, current research suggests that the Internet has become a milieu of escape for some individuals to break away from being governed by imposed structure and order in the modern world (e.g., Presdee 2000). The data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life demonstrates that 25% of the participants are very much motivated by "I am free to do whatever I want" and 31.8% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). Indeed, no one can be physically hurt by deviant activity, or punished for performing deviant activity in Second Life. Following these, it is natural to think of Second Life as an environment where deviant activities manifest frequently.

Ironically, in Second Life, as discussed in Chapter Four,²⁷ technological tools of surveillance, report and punishment could be seen as allowing the creation of a totalitarian

²⁶See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

²⁷See: Section 4.1.3 (*Geography and governance*).

cyber state, which is equal to anything found in science fiction — in the work of the bleakest imagination — a realistic depiction of George Orwell's *1984 Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948). In the real world, various technologies of surveillance, report and punishment, such as CCTV cameras are used as fundamental methods in controlling and eradicating deviance. In Second Life, the level of surveillance reaches a new height — indeed, technological perfection — because technological tools of surveillance, report and punishment are integral parts of the system architecture of Second Life. To label the obvious, potentially there is no privacy for an avatar in Second Life: every word typed and every movement made by the participants can be recorded and stored. This brings to mind the hypothesis suggesting that Second Life should be an environment where deviant activities do not occur frequently. The data on participants' experience and performance of deviant activities in Second Life seems to support this suggestion. This is discussed in more detail in Section 5.4 (*Conformity*).

In this section, the analysis is centred around how the data on participants' experience and performance of deviant activities in Second Life suggests an alternative picture of the popular perception that Second Life is an environment where deviant activities manifest frequently. The mean scores²⁸ of participants' experience and performance of each of the eight categories of acts are less than 2 (slightly deviant) (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). Moreover, most of these scores are quite close. First, consider the data on participants' experience of deviance. The data demonstrates that the category of community norms related acts has the highest mean score (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). Next, the mean scores of the three categories of community damage; powerful groups; and real world norms related acts are very close (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). The mean scores of the three categories of text & graphic; avatar; and avatar's identity & privacy related acts are also very close (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). The category of avatar's property related acts has the lowest mean score (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). Almost 60% of the participants have never experienced the category of community norms related acts during their last ten visits in Second Life (see: Appendix 9, figure 35). More than 86.4% of the participants have never experienced the category of avatar's property related acts during their last 10 visits in Second Life (see: Appendix 9, figure 35).

Next, consider the data on participants' performance of deviance. The data demonstrates that the category of community norms related acts has the highest mean score

²⁸In the second and third questionnaire, two groups of participants are asked to provide information about the number of times that they have experienced or performed acts in the standard list during their last ten visits in Second Life (preferably, each of these visits was longer than an hour): 1 = 0 (times), 2 = 1-5 (times), 3 = 6-10 (times), 4 = 11-15 (times), 5 = more than 15 (times). Due to various reasons, the participants are asked to report their experience of only 82 out of the 91 acts in the standard list, or performance of 89 out of the 91 acts. Only the 82 acts that are scored by both groups of participants are included in the calculation of mean scores in Appendix 9, figure 34.

and the category of real world norms related acts has the second highest mean score (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). The mean scores of the three categories of avatar's identity & privacy; avatar's property; and avatar related acts are very close (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). The mean scores of the three categories of text & graphic; powerful groups; and community damage related acts are also very close (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). More than 80% of the participants have never performed the three categories of community norms; real world norms; and avatar's identity & privacy related acts during their past ten visits in Second Life (see: Appendix 9, figure 36). More than 90% of the participants have never performed the remaining five categories of acts during their past ten visits in Second Life (see: Appendix 9, figure 36).

Consider the difference between participants' experience and performance of deviance. The two questionnaires have distinct sample populations. The mean score of the first sample population's experience of each of the eight categories of acts is higher than that of the second sample population's performance of each of the eight categories of acts (see: Appendix 9, figure 34).²⁹ Moreover, on average, 70.7% of the first group of participants have not experienced any of the eight categories of acts and 88.6% of the second group of participants have not performed any of the eight categories of acts during their past ten visits in Second Life (see: Appendix 9, figure 35 & 36). The 17.9% difference between this two figures presents an environment where there are more 'victims' than 'offenders'. Of course, this difference may be due to the fact that these two figures are obtained from two different sample populations. Moreover, individuals may be more willing to report other individuals' deviant acts against them, rather than their own. However, a discussion about the differences between the experience scores and performance scores of some of these acts, may provide some insights that are suggestive of other possible explanations. Moreover, a close look at these scores may also be able to provide a better understanding of the nature of deviant in Second Life.

In the category of Second Life norms related acts, with the exception of "belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised" ($E = 2.66$, $P = 3.34$), the rest of the acts have higher experience mean scores than performance mean scores (see: Appendix 9, figure 37). The data demonstrates that Second Life is an environment where many residents engage in behaviours that they consider to be largely idealised. Of course, this difference between the mean scores may be a result of different perceptions of what is idealised behaviour, between these two sample populations. However, in the questionnaire, this question is specially placed after "belonging to a community whose

²⁹Due to the fact that the results are obtained from two different groups of participants, the data and discoveries from this data are only used to suggest some possible analyses of the frequency of deviant activities in Second Life. No statistical test is performed across the two different samples.

behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world” and “belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life”, in order to make the participants think of ‘idealised’ as opposed to ‘deviant’. The two mean scores of “belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world” are extremely close ($E = 2.53$, $P = 2.52$, see: Appendix 9, figure 37). This may be suggestive of a consensus concerning what is deviant in the real world among the participants of these two sample populations.

The performance mean score of “belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life” is lower than that of the experience mean score ($E = 1.82$, $P = 1.57$) and the performance mean score of “not respecting local norms in ‘deviant’ sims” is lower than that of the experience mean score ($E = 1.45$, $P = 1.09$) (see: Appendix 9, figure 37). These differences may be partly attributed to the diversity of systems of norms in Second Life. Below a respondent describes how the diversity of systems of norms causes the difficulty in defining deviance in Second Life:

- “SL is a multi-national, multi-cultural sort of thing. What is welcome in one sim, is unwelcome in another. You will find differences in social rule sets from parcel to parcel, let alone sim to sim”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

The data and discoveries show that in Second Life, more residents are engaged in idealised behaviours ($P = 3.34$) than behaviours that would be deviant in the places of their residences in the real world ($P = 2.52$) or behaviours that would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life ($P = 1.57$) (see: Appendix 9, figure 37). In combination with previous analyses, the popular perception that individuals feel empowered to perform deviant activities in Second Life may be questionable.

In Second Life, Linden Lab has the power to prohibit activities that are against its institutional norms listed on the *Second Life Community Standards* (see: Appendix 15). However, Linden Lab’s descriptions of these prohibited activities tend to be very vague. Consequently, participants’ own interpretation of these descriptions may have significant influence on their behaviour, even if they choose to read through these regulations carefully. For example, one of the Big Six major ‘crimes’ in Second Life, harassment is defined by Linden Lab as “Communicating or behaving in a manner which is offensively coarse, intimidating, or threatening, constitutes unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours, or is otherwise likely to cause annoyance or alarm”.³⁰ Different participants may have highly dissimilar views about, for example, what may be considered

³⁰See: <http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php>; accessed 9/1/2008.

as “offensively coarse, intimidating, or threatening”. Following this, a well-meaning gesture from an individual may be perceived as deviant by another, resulting in a situation where deviant activities are everywhere.

Erikson wrote: “Deviance is not a property *inherent* in certain forms of behavior it is a properly *conferred upon* these forms by the audiences which directly or indirectly witness them. Sociologically, then, the critical variable in the study of deviance is the social audience rather than the individual *person*, since it is the audience which eventually decides whether or not any given action or actions will become a visible case of deviation” (Erikson 1962, p. 308; emphasis in original). Actually, a Second Life participant’s perception of deviance may be heavily influenced by his/her real life cultural and social background. This may be interpreted as a concrete example of Giddens’ definition of globalisation — the perception of deviance in Second Life is shaped by understandings occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens 1990).

For example, “broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life” has a much higher experience mean score than a performance mean score ($E = 2.32$, $P = 1.2$, see: Appendix 9, figure 38). Perhaps, this is simply because some individuals may not consider the sounds that they broadcast as annoying. For another example, “using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar” has a much higher experience mean score than performance mean score ($E = 1.64$, $P = 1.2$, see: Appendix 9, figure 43). Perhaps, this is because some individuals may not consider the looks of their avatars as threatening or aggressive. By the same token, “using aggressive security systems to protect private property” has a much higher experience mean score than a performance mean score ($E = 1.91$, $P = 1.61$, see: Appendix 9, figure 44) because some individuals may not consider their security systems as aggressive.

The four acts that are related to powerful groups have much higher experience mean scores than performance mean scores (see: Appendix 9, figure 39). This may be partly because these four acts are performed by small and specific groups of people (e.g., big corporations, as well as, powerful individuals and groups) against the general population of Second Life. Since the participants are selected by random sampling, these small groups of powerful individuals, as well as, individuals working for powerful corporations, are less likely to be selected.

With the exception of “using programs to vandalise community property” ($E = 1.34$, $p = 1.02$, see: Appendix 9, figure 38), the experience and performance mean scores of acts that require a higher level of technical skill to perform are very similar:

- “Sending a virus to another avatar’s ‘Give item’ box” ($E = 1$, $P = 1.05$, see:

Appendix 9, figure 44);

- “Using programs to change another avatar’s property” (E = 1.05, P = 1.05, see: Appendix 9, figure 44);
- “Using programs to take over another avatar’s property” (E = 1.02, P = 1.05, see: Appendix 9, figure 44);
- “Using programs to take over another avatar” (E = 1.11, P = 1.02, see: Appendix 9, figure 42);
- “Using programs to change another avatar” (E = 1.14, P = 1.16, see: Appendix 9, figure 42);
- “Taking advantage of the technological tools provided by SL to stalk another avatar” (E = 1.12, P = 1.11, see: Appendix 9, figure 42).

The data suggests that “using programs to vandalise community property” has a higher experience mean score than performance mean score, because individuals tend to have different perceptions towards what vandalism is. For example, in the UK, although graffiti vandalism has been prohibited since the 1970s by the *Criminal Damage Act 1971 (Section 1)*, there is still an ongoing debate over whether it is a form of art. Except the act concerning vandalism, the data on participants’ experience and performance of acts that require a higher level of technical skill to perform, demonstrates that this group of acts occurs rarely in Second Life.

The data on participants’ experience and performance of deviance in Second Life does not present the cybercommunity as an environment where deviant activities manifest frequently. So, does Second Life equate to deviant life? Below a respondent gives his/her answer to the question:

- “Does Second Life equate to deviant life? Yes. But then that is what Second Life was designed for. It is a deviation of Real Life. However. Deviant does not necessarily had to have bad connotations. Could YOU build the Eiffel Tower by yourself in Real Life? Probably not. Second Life is diverse to say the very least. One one level, Second Life has allowed people to expand their creative thinking well beyond what is achievable in Real Life. In this way it is not any different from any other 3D building program other than that it is rather more crude. On another level it has become a valuable tool for business and education. IBM have a number of sims dedicated to building, education and business that are beginning to pioneer success stories in Second Life. But it seems all of this gets lost in the press for the dark side of Second Life. Does Second Life encourage people to be Deviant? Certainly not. Second Life encourages you to use your imagination. The tag line is ‘your world, your imagination’. The dark side of Second Life has been in the press quite a bit and perhaps this has cast the platform in a bad light over recent times. Does Second Life encourage people to be deviant? Again no. But it does serve as

something of an unwitting catalyst for deviation of the mind to various levels including the dark side”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 6, 2009)

5.2.2 Time-space distancing in Second Life

The data on participants' experience and performance of deviance in Second Life is in contradiction with the popular idea that individuals are empowered to perform deviant activities in cybercommunities. As discussed previously, various systems of surveillance, report and punishment may have deterred some participants from performing deviant activity in Second Life. However, unlike in the real world, no one can be physically punished for performing deviant activity in Second Life. Consequently, the effectiveness of these technological systems are questionable. Although Linden Lab has the power to warn, suspend and even permanently banish transgressors of its institutional norms, these methods of punishment can easily be reverted. For example, a transgressor may have many different avatars, to him/her, the banishment of one of them would simply mean using a different one to continue his/her deviant activities. Hence, it is argued that systems of surveillance, report and punishment are only effective if there is a strong bond between individual participants and their Second Life avatars. This is the central focus of Section 5.4 (*Conformity*). Prior to examining the bond between individual participants and their Second Life avatars, an examination of the relationship between Second Life and the modern world is necessary.

As discussed in Chapter Two,³¹ the human creation of cybercommunities may be interpreted as a double-edged response to modernity: retreating from the existing imperfect social world in pursuit of an ideal world or pursuing a more extreme version of modernity to be carried beyond modernity itself. To understand this double-edged response, an understanding of the nature of modernity is necessary.

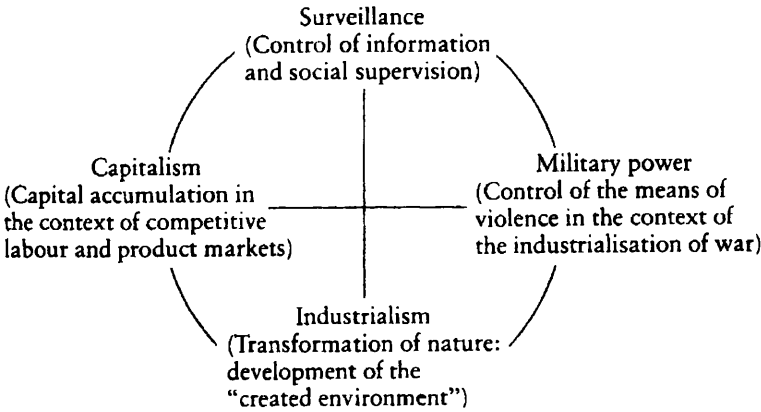
For Giddens the institutions of modern society contain four general dimensions: *capitalism*, *industrialism*, *surveillance* and *military power* (see: figure 5.1). Although each of these four dimensions has its independent logic and dynamic, which cannot be reduced to the others. They are parts of a dense network where they mutually affect and reinforce one another. For example, technological progresses brought about by industrialisation make possible more technologically advanced machines and tools for surveillance and control, mass communications and information transfers. Successively, new methods of communication and production, as well as, new demands for things to produce are intimately associated with a global form of capitalism. Below a respondent describes how

³¹See: Section 2.1.1 (*On cybercommunity*).

technological advancement and capitalism are closely associated with the rise of Second Life:

- “To me SL is a technological product. Intended to make money for it’s creators. A computer based entertainment/communication program. It’s users are customers. Not performers. Many pay to use it. Some pay quite a bit to use it. And by that virtue, I think they do have right to say in the direction of that product as they are helping to pay the freight. And we do have the right to decide what technologies we want in Second Life and what we use they for”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 6, 2009)



For another example, the state’s success in obtaining a monopoly of the means of violence is closely connected to the fact that increased surveillance capacity enables the modern state to develop a new criminal law and a control over deviants. Law and order is now managed by

the civil authorities. Consequently, the military plays only a secondary role in the maintenance of internal law and order within the states. While the military is used against external enemies, capitalism and industrialism also reinforce each other. They have facilitated the high degree of industrialisation of the military and consequently, the increased military strength of the nation-state.

These four institutional dimensions and their intertwining relationships are central to the rise of modernity. These four institutional dimensions appear in Western Europe at first, now they have become an increasingly more global phenomenon. Following this, the inter-relationship between the developing nature of these institutional dimensions, therefore, has important implications for the organising of social relationships in time and space. The implications of the complex interactions between the four institutional dimensions of modernity have led to an increased level of *time-space distancing*, such that social relations may now span the globe, instantaneously. Giddens defines *time-space distancing* as:

“The stretching of social systems across time-space, on the basis of mechanisms of social and system integration” (Giddens 1989, p. 377).

For Giddens the dislocation of time and space is one of the primary characteristics of modern social life. The dislocation of time and space means that social relations in

time and space are stretched across increasingly large geographical areas. This process involves:

“The disentangling of separated dimensions of ‘empty’ time and ‘empty’ space, making possible the articulation of disembedded social relations across indefinite spans of time/space” (Giddens 1991, p. 244).

In this thesis, ‘time-space distancing’ is a fundamental social property that allows a comparison between the characteristics of social relations in Second Life and the real world, as well as, enables the analysis of the nature of deviance in Second Life in the much broader context of modernity.

In the analysis of deviance in Second Life, it has become evident that these four institutional dimensions and their intertwining relationships are closely associated with the rise of cybercommunities, in particular Second Life. As discussed in Chapter Two,³² the modern discourse of community may be understood as the loss and the recovery of community. On one hand, the emergence of capitalism and the decline in the autonomy of the cities as a result of the rise of the modern nation-states, led to the loss of community. On the other hand, the birth and rise of cybercommunities may be seen as the fulfillment of “the promise of a renewed sense of community” and “new types and formations of community” surrounding the Internet (Jones 1998, p. 3).

Time-space distancing and related social concepts may be able to facilitate a deeper understanding of the rise of Second Life, both at the level of generalities and the intimacies of actual individual action. Giddens wrote:

“The administrative system of the capitalist state, and of modern states in general, has to be interpreted in terms of the coordinated control over delimited territorial arenas which it achieves. . . . Such administrative concentration depends in turn upon the development of *surveillance* capacities well beyond those characteristic of traditional civilisations” (Giddens 1990, p. 57; emphasis in original).

Surveillance is, therefore, a central dimension to the development of organised social systems associated with the modern nation-state. More importantly, surveillance could be interpreted as a central dimension to the rise of modernity itself. Giddens wrote:

“The successful monopoly of the means of violence in the part of the modern state rests upon secular maintenance of new codes of criminal law, plus the supervisory control of “deviance” ” (Giddens 1990, p. 59).

³²See: Section 2.1.1 (*On cybercommunity*).

One thing control means is the subordination of nature to human purposes: the application of humanly organised principles of science and technology to the mastery of the natural world. Giddens wrote: “Modern industry, shaped by the alliance of science and technology, transforms the world of nature in ways unimaginable to earlier generations. In the industrialised sectors of the globe—and, increasingly, elsewhere—human beings live in a *created environment*, an environment of action which is, of course, physical but no longer just natural. Not just the built environment of urban areas but most other landscapes as well become subject to human coordination and control” (Giddens 1990, p. 60). Actually, the natural world has become in large part, a created environment, consisting of humanly structured systems. In such a created environment, modern forms of surveillance and control are inherently depersonalising and globalising. Depersonalising because individuals and individual actions are reduced to measurable indices and globalising because these indices are shaped with, and understood, not just within the immediate physical, social, political and personal contexts, but also much more broadly, even spanning the globe.

Depersonalisation pushes individuals to participate in environments, such as Second Life, where they can retreat from the imposed structures and control of the modern world and be known as ‘who they really are’. The data on the motivation behind individuals’ participation in Second Life demonstrates that 15.9% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can escape from the structures that govern life in the real world” and 34.1% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 5). To some participants, Second Life is a place where they can escape from the imperfections in the real world: 15.9% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can escape from the imperfections in the real world” and 27.3% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 5). Moreover, 22.7% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can be in a different place” and 31.8% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 5). Instead of some quantifiable indices, some participants of Second Life join the cybercommunity to be known as whom they are: 34.1% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can be known as whom I truly am” and 20.5% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). This is discussed in more detail in Section 5.3 (*Self-identity*).

Globalisation pulls rather than pushes individuals to participate in environments, such as Second Life, where they are able to pursue some intensified experiences of certain characteristics of modernity. Actually, globalisation enables the rapid growth of Second Life, and the deep integration of Second Life and human society — Second Life is more than a social networking tool — it is, certainly — a global community. Indeed, like modernity, Second Life is also inherently globalising. To understand this suggestion, a

precise definition of globalisation is necessary.

Giddens argues: “Modernity is inherently globalising — this is evident in some of the most basic characteristics of modern institutions, including particularly their disembeddedness and reflexivity. . . . The undue reliance which sociologists have placed upon the idea of “society”, where this means a bounded system, should be replaced by a starting point that concentrates upon analysing how social life is ordered across time and space — the problematic of time-space distancing. The conceptual framework of time-space distancing directs our attention to the complex relations between *local involvement* (circumstances of co-presence) and *interaction across distance* (the connections of presence and absence). In the modern era, the level of time-space distancing is much higher than in any previous period, and the relations between local and distant social forms and events become correspondingly “stretched.” Globalisation refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth’s surface as a whole” (Giddens 1990, p. 63-64; emphasis in original). Giddens wrote:

“Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens 1990, p. 64).

The cybercommunity Second Life is inherently globalising and can be perceived abstractly as an exemplar of modernity. In Second Life, modernity displaces the individual and makes place more phantasmagoric (cf. Giddens 1990). For Giddens ‘place as phantasmagoric’ is “the process whereby local characteristics of place are thoroughly invaded by, and reorganised in terms of, distanced social relations” (Giddens 1991, p. 244). Second Life exemplifies this process. However, as discussed in Chapter Two,³³ a phantasmagoric place, such as Second Life that displaces individuals from the familiarity of the home and the local neighbourhood into indefinite time-space, may not be an impersonal one (Giddens 1990, pp. 140-141). In fact, “As Joshua Meyrowitz points out, a person on the telephone to another, perhaps, on the opposite side of the world, is more closely bound to that distant other than to another individual in the same room (who may be asking, “Who is it? What’s she saying?” and so forth)” (Giddens 1990, p. 141).

This familiarity of intimacy is brought about by the counterpart of displacement — reembedding. Reembedding enables the sustainment of intimacy at distance. Giddens wrote: “The disembedding mechanisms lift social relations and the exchange of information out of specific time-space contexts, but at the same time provide new opportunities

³³See: Section 2.1.1 (*On cybercommunity*).

for their reinsertion” (Giddens 1990, p. 141). For example, “the very means of transportation which help to dissolve the connection between locality and kinship provide the possibility for reembedding, by making it easy to visit “close” relatives who are far away” (Giddens 1990, p. 142). In Second Life, with the aid of teleportation system, an individual is able to travel from one sub-community to another within a matter of seconds.

The data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life shows that “I can have instant access to any of my choices of things to do” has the highest mean score and “I can have many choices of things to do” has the third highest mean score among the 39 motivation (Appendix 4). Moreover, 31.8% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can have many choices of things to do” and 29.5% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 5). More than one third of the population (34.1%) are very much motivated by “I can have instant access to any of my choices of things to do” and the same proportion of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 5).

The data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life demonstrates that some of the participants are aware of there are consequences to their activities in Second Life and they have to take responsibilities for their activities. Only 9.1% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can do lots of things without worrying about the consequences”, whereas more than three times the proportion of them (29.5%) are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). Similarly, only 11.4% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can have no responsibilities”, whereas more than twice the proportion of them (25%) are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9).

Actually, Second Life is not an environment in which “large, impersonal systems increasingly swallow up most of personal life” (Giddens 1990, p. 142). Instead, it is a place where individuals find friends and build attachments with other people. The data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life demonstrates that “I can meet and be friends with like-minded people” has the second highest mean score, “I can enjoy general social interactions” has the fourth highest mean score and “I can have a hobby shared with my friends” has the fifth highest mean score, among the 39 motivations (Appendix 4). Moreover, 27.3% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can meet and be friends with like-minded people”, 36.4% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property and, more importantly, none of the participants is not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 7). Almost 30% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can enjoy general social interactions” and 36.4% of them

are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 7).

Second Life not only provides an environment for individuals to enjoy general social interactions and make friends, but also acts as an abstract system, through which individuals are able to sustain their existing real world friendships: 31.8% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can have a hobby shared with my friends” and 25% of them are very much motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 13). Furthermore, 18.2% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can enjoy romantic encounters” and 11.4% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 7).

For Giddens friendship is a mode of reembedding, but it “is not directly involved in abstract systems themselves, which explicitly overcome dependency upon personal ties” (Giddens 1990, p. 119). In Second Life, various abstract systems, such as systems of *Friendship Cards*, *Partner*, *local chat* and *instant message*, enable participants to sustain intimacy in an environment that is constructed by computer software. A step further along than the real world, in Second Life, friendship and partnership as modes of reembedding are directly involved in abstract systems. This explains close personal attachments among individual participants in Second Life, which is the main agenda in 5.4 (*Conformity*). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Four,³⁴ Linden Lab has involved various technological systems of surveillance, report and punishment in the governance of Second Life, e.g., *Abuse Report* and *Bumps, Pushes/Hits*. These technological systems are also modes of reembedding, providing participants with familiar features that are associated with safety and security in the unfamiliar environment of cybercommunity.

Actually, the cybercommunity Second Life is not a world of strangers nor an environment constructed by heartless machines. It is a world of people, where social relationships and personal intimacies are directly involved in abstract technological systems; where social control and constraint are in-built in the technological architecture of the cybercommunity. In such an environment, individuals may have a more relaxed attitude towards what is commonly thought of as deviant than the real world. However, this does not necessarily mean deviant activities frequently occur in Second Life. In fact, the data on individuals’ experience and performance of deviance in Second Life displays an environment where deviant activities occur only infrequently.

³⁴See: Section 4.1.3 (*Geography and governance*).

5.3 Self-identity

In this section, the discussion is centred around the notion of self-identity. As discussed in Chapter Two,³⁵ the structural transformations of modernity have unleashed the subject of self and self-identity in which the self is not a fixed entity but a reflexive project — a reconstruction of the individual, collective life-stories and identities (Giddens 1990). Giddens defines *the reflexive project of the self* as “the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives” (Giddens 1991, p. 244). Self-identity, in turn, has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (Giddens 1990, p. 52). Giddens defines self-identity as:

“the self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography” (Giddens 1991, p. 244).

Indeed, an individual’s self-identity is created and reproduced through the personal choices the individual makes in his/her everyday life, including the design of bodily appearance (Giddens 1991, p. 102). For Giddens an individual’s bodily appearance is inextricably linked to his/her self-identity. Giddens wrote:

“The body is an object in which we are all privileged, or doomed, to dwell, the source of well-being and pleasure, but also the site of illness and strains. However, . . . the body is not just a physical entity which we ‘possess’, it is an action-system, a mode of praxis, and its practical immersion in the interactions of day-to-day life is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity” (Giddens 1991, p. 99).

As discussed in Chapter Two,³⁶ in Second Life, an avatar could be identified as a visual representation of a real world individual. An avatar, therefore, could be named as *the cyber body*, which performs similar functions in Second Life as the body does in the real world. Actually, like the body in the real world, the cyber body or avatar is “experienced as a particular mode of coping with external situations and events” in Second Life (Giddens 1991, p. 56).

Of course, having an avatar entails different meanings to different individuals. As discussed in Chapter Four,³⁷ the analysis of the relationship between an individual’s self-identity and his/her Second Life avatar, rests upon three intertwining aspects: the construction of self, the cyberbody and the building of a deviant identity. As discussed

³⁵See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

³⁶See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

³⁷See: Section 4.2.3 (*Self-identity*).

in Chapter Two³⁸ and Chapter Four,³⁹ although physical resemblance between an individual and his/her Second Life avatar is an important part for feelings of ontological security, the notion of bearing resemblance lies beyond the level of physical appearance. The degree of identification between an individual and his/her avatar is also intimately associated with the reasons behind his/her participation in Second Life. In this section, these issues are discussed in the light of data collected.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Second Life may be considered as a natural ground where deviant activities manifest, because of three main reasons: (i) a complicated systems of norms; (ii) no one can be physically hurt by deviant activities or punished for performing deviant activities; and (iii) anonymity. The discussions in the previous two sections have challenged this perception. In the first section, it is suggested that although every act in Second Life may be considered as deviant by some participants, because of the complicated systems of norms, it does not necessarily mean that there is a huge amount of 'real' deviance in Second Life. In the second section, it is suggested that although some participants may feel empowered in Second Life, it does not necessarily mean that they would perform deviant activities in the cybercommunity. Indeed, the data on participants' experience and performance shows Second Life to be an environment where deviant activities do not manifest frequently.

In the first part of this section, the discussion begins with an analysis of the relationship between anonymity and deviance. Current research on behaviour on the Internet suggests that anonymity is a key cause of deviant behaviour online (e.g., Demetious et al. 2003; Postmes et al. 1999; Curtis 1992). However, in an advanced cybercommunity, such as Second Life, the notion of anonymity needs to be understood radically differently. As discussed previously,⁴⁰ depersonalisation in the modern world has reduced individuals and individual actions to measurable indices. Individuals are anonymised in the real world. Consequently, it is possible that some individuals choose to participate in Second Life to re-embrace their subjective identities. This possibility contradicts the third main reason (anonymity) that supports the perception that deviant activities manifest frequently in Second Life. This possibility could also explain the low occurrence of deviance in Second Life as demonstrated by the data on participants' experience and performance of deviance. However, the low occurrence of deviant activities in Second Life, does not reduce the social and criminological significance of deviance in Second Life. In the second part of this section, the seriousness of the personal and social harm of deviance in Second Life is explained through a discussion of Giddens' notions of reflexivity

³⁸See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

³⁹See: Section 4.2.3 (*Self-identity*).

⁴⁰See: Section 5.2.2 (*Time-space distanciation in Second Life*).

and ontological insecurity. The discussion also offers an explanation of why Second Life is often considered as a natural environment where deviant activities manifest frequently.

5.3.1 Anonymity

Current research on behaviour on the Internet demonstrates that behaviour online differs from similar behaviour offline in a number of ways (Joinson 1998). The process of deindividuation is used as one possible way to explain these differences. Deindividuation is a psychological state of decreased self-restraint when “individuals are not seen or paid attention to as individuals” (Festinger et al. 1952, p. 382). This psychological state can cause disinhibited behaviour. McKenna and Bargh wrote: “Some of the outcomes of deindividuation include a weakened ability for an individual to regulate his or her own behaviour, reduced ability to engage in rational, long-term planning, and a tendency to react to immediate cues or based largely on his or her current emotional state. Furthermore, an individual will be less likely to care what others think of his or her behaviour and may even have a reduced awareness of what others have said or done. These effects can culminate in impulse and disinhibited behaviour. . .” (McKenna & Bargh 2000, p. 61). Past research has linked deindividuation to a range of deviant activities, such as murder, violence, cheating and stealing (e.g., Diener et al. 1976).

Anonymity has been identified as one of the key causes of deindividuation (Zimbardo 1969). As discussed in Chapter Four,⁴¹ anonymity causes the lowering of social inhibition and encourages deviant behaviour and aggression (Lieberman et al. 1999). Zimbardo’s (1969) research demonstrates that participants who have their identities masked are much more willing to give electric shocks to strangers and at more severe levels than those who have their identities unmasked. Following Zimbardo (1969) more recent research has shown that individuals who believe their identities are unknown, are more likely to behave in an aggressive and punitive manner (e.g., Postmes & Spears 1998; Ellison et al. 1995).

A significant amount of research has been dedicated to the effect of anonymity on behaviour in CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) (Douglas & McGarty 2001). Earlier research on the association between anonymity and deviance in CMC demonstrates that anonymous computer users are much more likely to be aggressive and hostile when communicating (e.g., Siegel et al. 1983). However, more recent research presents a more complex relationship between anonymity and deviance in CMC. Some CMC users feel in CMC they are more at ease to express, and experiment with, aspects of their personalities that social inhibitions would generally encourage them to suppress in real

⁴¹See: Section 4.2.1 (*Norm*).

life (Reid 1991). This is because of the combination of two factors, firstly, anonymity in CMC offers them a form of protection and, secondly, there are fewer social context cues to indicate appropriate behaviours in CMC (Reid 1991). Curtis (1992) coins the term *shipboard syndrome* and uses it to explain the relationship between anonymity and deviance in CMC — some users feel that since they are unlikely to meet other users in real life, there is less social risk involved in CMC and inhibition may be lowered. Demetious et al.'s (2003) research demonstrates that in CMC, individuals find it harder to resist the temptation to engage in behaviour that are normally subjected to strong social disapproval or sanction.

Postmes et al. (1999) suggest that the association between anonymity and deviance in CMC may be better understood in terms of *group-specific social norms* — anonymity will only lead to deviant behaviour (as defined by social norms of the majority) if the norms in the specific context allow for it. Hence, while participating in a computer mediated environment, an individual is not necessarily more likely to engage in behaviour that contradicts general social norms, but is more likely to engage in behaviour that conforms to the specific social norms of the environment. Postmes et al.'s (1999) research suggests that the relationship between anonymity and deviance needs to be evaluated in combination with another factor — social norm. In this research, instead of thinking of the possible combined impact on behaviour that anonymity may have with other social imperatives in Second Life, the notion of anonymity is evaluated radically differently.

Anonymity is not a product of the Internet. Anonymous communication basically means that the real name of the sender of a message is not shown. A common variant of anonymity is pseudonymity. In this case, another name other than the real name of the author is shown. It is natural to assume that anonymity is one of the main attractions of Second Life, since social interactions are carried out via 3D avatars. These 3D avatars are often given names and images different from those of the real world individuals behind them. The data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life demonstrates that 25% of the participants are very much motivated by "I can be anonymous", 20.5% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property, whereas 22.7% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9; figure 9). However, anonymity does not necessarily lead to deviance. Below a participant describes the association between anonymity and deviance in Second Life:

- "People are making an assumption that SL was created to be different from RL and yet in so many ways it mimics RL spectacularly (primarily when dealing with the behaviours of people). Yes, the ANONYMITY SL offers encourages most people to censor themselves less. Does that anonymity increase deviant behaviour? No, it only gives it forum to take place".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

Moreover, equipped with advanced 3D avatar creation technology, participants are able to reinvent themselves in Second Life. As discussed in Chapter Two,⁴² under the conditions of modernity, individuals live in the *pluralisation of life-worlds*. An individual's self-identity is constituted by various componential selves — segmented public and private roles that the individual plays (Berger et al. 1974). Berger et al. (1974) propose that “*on the institutional level*”, the “*segregation of work from private life*” has been “one of the important consequences of the industrial revolution” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 34; emphasis in original).

Certainly, modernity has been defined differently by social scientists and historians, but they tend to agree on one proposition — “a central feature of the modern world is technological production” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 29). The most important feature of technological production is *mechanistic* — “the work process has a machine-like functionality so that the actions of the individual worker are tied in as an intrinsic part of a machines process” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 31; emphasis in original). A correlate of mechanistic is *reproductivity* — every action within the work process can be “reproduced and indeed must be reproducible, either by the same worker or by another worker with comparable training” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 31; emphasis in original).

Berger et al. suggest that “technological production brings with it anonymous social relations” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 35). Moreover, the *world of work* dominates social lives of the majority of the population in the modern world (Berger et al. 1974). Consequently, as discussed previously,⁴³ individuals and individual actions are reduced to measurable indices. In Berger et al.'s terms, an individual may “experience ‘alienation’, that is, he will no longer be able to recognize himself in this *or* the other component of his subjective identity” (Berger et al. 1974, p. 38; emphasis in original).

In short, some individuals in the modern world may feel anonymised in most social life worlds in which they inhabit. Following this “there must be a private world in which the individual can express... elements of subjective identity which must be denied in the work situation. The alternative to this would be the transformation of individuals into mechanical robots, not only in the external performance of roles but on the subjective level of their own consciousness of self” (Berger et al. 1974, pp. 38-39).

As discussed in Chapter Two,⁴⁴ Berger et al. suggest that in order to remove themselves from the dominance of the world of work, individuals “must go on vacation literally or figuratively” and such a vacation always “involves a deliberate and often very difficult

⁴²See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

⁴³See: Section 5.2.2 (*Time-space distanciation in Second Life*).

⁴⁴See: section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

effort to shake off precisely that reality that is foremost in the individual's work life" (Berger et al. 1974, p. 101). The data demonstrates that a large proportion of participants in Second Life do not associate their participation in Second Life with going on vacation. Actually, only 15.9% of the participants are quite a lot or very much motivated by "I can enjoy vacation", whereas 36.4% of them are not at all motivated by this motivation (see: Appendix 9, figure 13). However, the data on some of the self-identity related motivations may be used to suggest that some individuals participate in Second Life to reconstruct, and re-embrace with, their subjective identities (see: Appendix 9, figure 8):

- "I can be someone else" (M = 2.93)
- "I can be known as whom I truly am" (M = 3.60)
- "I can create a different image of myself" (M = 3.43)
- "I can live a different life as another person" (M = 3.00)
- "I can be anonymous" (M = 3.09)

The data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life suggests that some individuals participate in Second Life because they are able to be someone else in the cybercommunity: 22.7% of the participants are very much motivated by "I can be someone else" and 18.2% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). Some individuals participate in Second Life to live a different life as another person: 18.2% of the participations are very much motivated by "I can live a different life as another person" and 25% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). Below a participant describes how Second Life provides participants with an opportunity to be someone else:

- "Yes, there is the lie of pretending to be a woman and many people have got snagged in this lie in the past (not me, thankfully). There was a story in a Second Life tabloid about a man who had been dating this woman in SL for a year and was going to marry her in RL and live with her, etcetera. Only... she was a man in Real Life. Most of it, and when i say most i would say 85%, is innocent fun".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

Perhaps, to some participants, the 3D avatar creation technology in Second Life provides them with an opportunity to reinvent themselves. Actually, 29.5% of the participants are very much motivated by "I can create a different image of myself", 25% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property, whereas only 11.4% of them are not at all motivated (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). Below three participants give narratives that demonstrate how Second Life provides participants with an opportunity to reinvent themselves:

- “Some people have disabilities. There was a story not too long ago about a man who could not walk who found the ability to walk in Second Life rather refreshing”.
- “This place can be a fantastic environments for people with disabilities and people with social issues. I don’t really know what “shyness” is but I can imagine how important SL can be to them”.
- “Yes. there are people who fully immerse themselves in Second Life. It then becomes their First Life and while it is tragic, it comes about for many reasons. Escapism. Many people have had tough lives, to them, Second Life represents a clean break where they can be someone new... ”.

(Forum correspondence from correspondents, March 6, 2009)

Gestures

/blowkiss
 /boo
 /bored
 /bow
 /chuckle
 /clap
 /count
 /cry
 /embarrassed
 /excuseme
 /extinguish
 /getlost
 /hey
 /heybaby
 /kmb
 /laugh
 /lookinggood
 /muscle
 /no
 /no!
 /overhere
 /paper
 /please
 /pointme
 /pointyou
 /repulsed
 /rock
 /scissor
 /shrug
 /smoke
 /stretch
 /whistle
 /yes
 /yes!
 #fk

The data demonstrates that “I can be known as whom I truly am” has the highest mean score among the five self-identity related motivations that are listed previously. Moreover, 34.1% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can be known as whom I truly am”, 20.5% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property, whereas only 9.1% of them are not at all motivated (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). Indeed, “The ideal self is the ‘self as I want to be’ ” (Giddens 1990, p. 68). Second Life has provided its participants with an opportunity to become their ideal selves.

As discussed in Chapter Two,⁴⁵ in contrast to many real world communities, Second Life emerges from far less inter-related and complicated social relations. At least, for most of its participants, the social world Second Life is very much separated from the world of work, which as discussed previously, dominates social lives of the majority of the population in the modern world (Berger et al. 1974). Second Life, therefore, provides them with a private world in which they are able to express their subjective identities. With this in mind, the created selves represented by various avatars in Second Life may be true reflections of the individuals behind them. As discussed previously, 3D avatars may be understood as the cyber bodies of the individuals involved, which play similar roles as the bodies in the real world. For Giddens the body is an integrated part of self-identity and a natural part of the reflexive considerations of the self. Giddens wrote:

“Facial expressions and other gestures provide the fundamental content of that contextuality or indexicality which

Figure 5.2: Gestures

⁴⁵See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

is the condition of everyday communication. To learn to become a competent agent — able to join with others on an equal basis is the production and reproduction of social relations — is to be able to exert a continuous, and successful, monitoring of face and body. Bodily control is a central aspect of what ‘we cannot say in words’ because it is the necessary framework for what we can say (or can say meaningfully)” (Giddens 1991, p. 56).

In Second Life, participants are able to instruct their avatars to perform various bodily gestures (see: figure 5.2). Bodily gestures help individuals to monitor their cyber bodies as they monitor their bodies in the real world. Moreover, these bodily gestures also help individual participants to communicate with others in much the same way as they communicate in the real world. More importantly, in the real world, individuals attempt to control their bodies to fit into the reflexive project of the self. Giddens speaks of different bodily regimes such as eating habits, clothing and sexuality as areas that are subordinated to various forms of self-control. These different bodily regimes are also means for individuals to create and maintain a special self-identity, both subjectively and intersubjectively. Giddens wrote:

“Regularised control of the body is a fundamental means whereby a biography of self-identity is maintained; yet at the same time the self is also more or less constantly ‘on display’ to others in terms of its embodiment” (Giddens 1991, pp. 57-58).

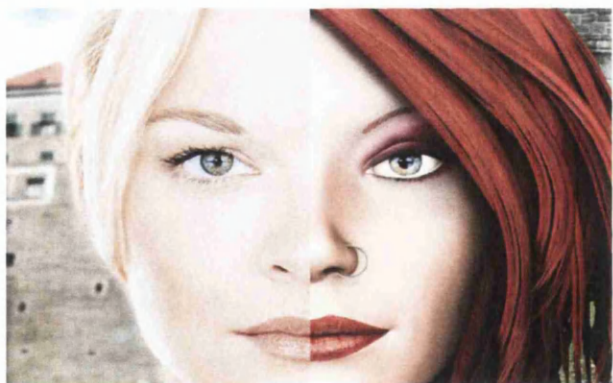


Figure 5.3: Maintaining normal appearance

Regularised control of the body helps individuals to maintain their *normal appearances*, which are “the (closely monitored) bodily mannerisms by means of which the individual actively reproduces the protective cocoon in situations of ‘normalcy’. ‘Normal appearances mean that it is safe and sound to continue on with the activity at hand with only peripheral at-

tention given to checking up on the stability of the environment’ ” (Giddens 1991, p. 58). The set of bodily gestures available in Second Life could be seen as a means that help individuals to achieve a sense of normalcy. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Two,⁴⁶ an individual would feel ontologically secure in a new social context, if his/her normal appearances are carried on in ways consistent with his/her biographical narratives (Giddens 1991).

⁴⁶See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

Perhaps, some participants create avatars based on their real world physical appearances to feel ontologically secure in Second Life (see: figure 5.3). The need to feel ontologically secure may also explain the large proportion of human avatars in Second Life, despite the fact that an individual is free to be 'what' he/she wants to be. The data on participants' demographic characteristics demonstrates that in the first sample, 63.6% of the participants use human avatars (see: Appendix 9, figure 45). In both the second sample and the third sample, 79.5% of the participants use human avatars (see: Appendix 9, figure 46 & 47). The following extracts show that individuals design their avatars based on their real life appearances or personalities:

- "I like to have an avatar that is a realistic depiction of my person. I prefer to see my avatar as visualisation of my personality rather than a simple tool".
- "I feel from the start of my SL experience, my avatar has been an on screen representation of my real personality. As I have been involved the kind of communities I like in RL, I tend to be involved in the same way in SL".
- "My avatar is not deviant at all, it is just a more extrovert version of my real life personality".

(Forum correspondence from correspondents, March 4, 2009)

- "My avatar is very much like me, not physically in this respect, I am not the same size as her and I am a red head, my AV has black hair and no freckles. But She does not involve herself in any activity she would not do or has done in RL".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

- "Actually, my avatar always looks exactly like me — jeans, tee shirt, scruffy hair and grumpy. I'm just not thin enough and I wish I could just stop flying around and stop smacking into High Street windows every time I fly outside".
- "In RL I would not dress as I do in SL well not any more since I am now 46 but the things I do in SL are similar to what I do or have done in RL".

(Forum correspondence from correspondents, March 6, 2009)

The data on participants' perception of deviance demonstrates that with the exception of the category of powerful groups related acts, participants with human avatars rate the other seven categories of acts higher than those with non-human avatars (see: Appendix 9, figure 48). Perhaps, participants with non-human avatars do not want the power structure of human world to be brought into Second Life. Hence, they feel more strongly about powerful groups taking over Second Life. Moreover, a statistically significant result from an Independent Samples Test shows that from a point of statistical significance, participants with human avatars consider the category of real world norms

related acts as more deviant than those with non-human avatars (see: Appendix 9, figure 49).

The data and discoveries show that although anonymity is one of the main reasons behind individuals' participation in Second Life, it may not necessarily lead to deviance in the cybercommunity. Like many environments in the real world, Second Life may just be another environment where deviant activities manifest. As discussed previously,⁴⁷ the data on participants' experience and performance of deviance demonstrates Second Life as an environment where deviant activities do not manifest frequently. Perhaps, this is partly because of an individual's self-identity is routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual across different social worlds, including that of the cybercommunity Second Life. The data demonstrates that there is a large amount of human avatars in Second Life, and as those individuals carry their real world physical appearance to Second Life, they also carry with them — real world norms and values. Consequently, Second Life may not be a context where deviant activities manifest more frequently than many contexts in the real world.

However, an improved understanding of the notion of self-identity may be able to partly explain the reason behind the popular perception that Second Life is a natural environment where deviance manifests frequently. Although there are many similarities between Second Life and the modern world, there are also many differences — not least that Second Life exists in cyberspace. As discussed in Chapter Two,⁴⁸ to participate in Second Life, an individual has to disembodiment himself from the more familiar tracks in the physical world, such as family and work. This would automatically exacerbate his/her sense of ontological insecurity. Consequently, as discussed earlier, a large percentage of individuals use human avatars as a means to maintain a certain degree of normalcy in order to feel secure. For the same reason, there are also individuals who design their avatars based on their real world physical appearances (see: figure 5.3).

Another consequence of this exacerbated ontological insecurity is the desire to demonise others. As discussed previously,⁴⁹ the data on participants' perception of deviance in Second Life is suggestive of a context where there are conflicts in individuals' perceptions of deviance, which reflect a questioning of established certainties. The desire to demonise others, therefore, could be seen as a direct response to the deconstruction of fixed identity and certainty. Young wrote: "The desire to demonise others is based on the ontological uncertainties of those who would site themselves at centre stage" (Young 1999, p. 165). This may partly explain the data on participants' experience and perfor-

⁴⁷See: Section 5.2.1 (*The frequency of deviance in Second Life*).

⁴⁸See: Section 2.2.1 (*Pluralism and ontological insecurity*).

⁴⁹See: Section 5.1.2 (*The nature of deviance in Second Life*).

mance of deviance, as discussed previously,⁵⁰ the data is suggestive of a context where there are more ‘victims’ than ‘offenders’.

Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Two,⁵¹ the culture of individualism in modern societies gives rise to crime and disorder because of two reasons, firstly, individualism leads to the pursuit of selfish interests and, secondly, individualism results in a lowered tolerance of violence against the individual (Young 1999). The first reason actually accounts for the real increase in the frequency of crime and disorder in modern societies, whereas the second reason explains how the increased level of crime and disorder in modern societies is constructed.

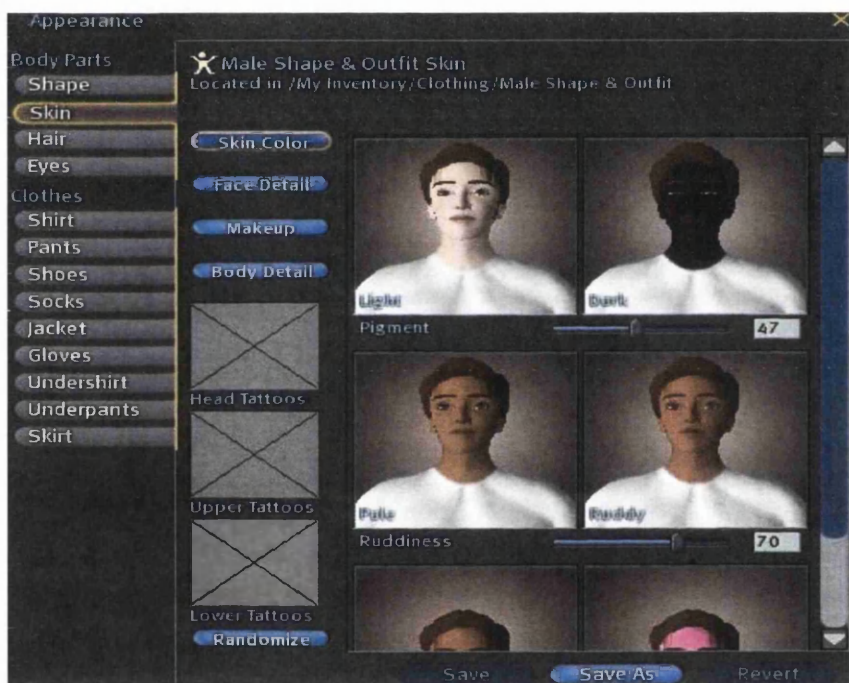


Figure 5.4: Editing appearance

Perhaps, the second reason may be used to explain the association between individualism and deviance in Second Life. Despite the large percentage of human avatars in Second Life, it is still an environment where diversity, self-creation and self-expression reach a new height. Equipped

with 3D and n-th degree avatar creation technology, individuals are able to create unique avatars (see: figure 5.4). This makes Second Life an environment where all creeds and colours are well represented — where individualism truly flourishes.⁵² If individualism results in a lowered tolerance of violence against the individual in the real world, then a heightened sense of individualism in Second Life may result in a lowered tolerance of deviance in the cybercommunity. Perhaps, this may also partly explain the data that demonstrates Second Life as a context where there are more ‘victims’ than ‘offenders’.

The desire to demonise others, as a result of the deconstruction of fixed identity and

⁵⁰See: Section 5.2.1 (*The frequency of deviance in Second Life*).

⁵¹See: Section 2.2.1 (*Pluralism and ontological insecurity*).

⁵²See: Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2 (*People and community*).

certainty, which flourishes under the conditions of modernity, may be intimately related to the increasing public concern over deviance in Second Life. Hobsbawm wrote: “Increasingly one’s identity had to be constructed by insisting on the non-identity of others” (Hobsbawm 1994, p. 429). Perhaps, just as the neo-Nazi skinheads in Germany establish their essential Germanness by beating up local Turks and Albanians (Hobsbawm 1994), many individuals re-embrace their ontological security and sense of normality by labelling participants in Second Life as the deviant others. Individuals who participate in Second Life are easy targets, because although Second Life is one of the social worlds, it is fundamentally different from other worlds — it exists in cyberspace. As discussed in Chapter Two,⁵³ participants in Second Life are perfect candidates to be demonised, because they may be individuals who for personal or social reasons have not been fully integrated into life in the real world. Therefore, just as the Turks and Albanians are foreign to the neo-Nazi skinheads in Germany, individuals who participate in Second Life are foreign to those who do not — the majority of the population. The extract below demonstrates that participants in Second Life are aware of Second Life’s not at all pristine reputation among individuals in the real world:

- “I see where you coming from, but I doubt this will have any impact on Second Life’s <sarcasm>PRISTINE </sarcasm>reputation amongst the mindless masses of First Life”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

5.3.2 The reflexivity of modernity and ontological insecurity

The data and discoveries in Section 5.3.1 (*Anonymity*) support the suggestion that an individual’s self-identity is routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual across different social worlds, including the cybercommunity Second Life. Consequently, it is suggested that deviance in Second Life not only negatively affects the individuals involved, but also social cohesion in the real world.

To understand this suggestion, it is necessary to understand Giddens’ notion of reflexivity. Giddens identifies two different forms of reflexivity. The first one is “a defining feature of all human action” — “All human beings routinely “keep in touch” with the grounds of what they do as an integral element of doing it” (Giddens 1990, p. 36). Giddens names this process — the “reflexive monitoring of action” (Giddens 1990, p. 36). This process exists in both traditional and modern periods. The second form of reflexivity is unique to modernity. For Giddens modern society is experiencing a process of reflexivity at both the institutional and personal levels. This form of reflexivity is able to justify the suggestion that deviance in Second Life causes personal and social

⁵³See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*) & Section 2.2.1 (*Pluralism and ontological insecurity*).

harm in the broader context of the real world.

Giddens defines this form of reflexivity as modern institutions' and individuals' regular and constant use of knowledge as the conditions for society's organisation and change. Giddens wrote:

“The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character” (Giddens 1990, p. 38).

For example, the researcher undertakes public surveys in order to find out individuals' perception of deviance in Second Life. Moreover, in this research, the adaptive research process is another example of a reflexive social practice.⁵⁴ Giddens wrote: “The assembling of official statistics is itself a reflexive endeavour, permeated by the very findings of the social sciences that have utilised them” (Giddens 1990, p. 42).

This type of reflexivity is unique to modernity. In traditional societies, actions are based exclusively on tradition and cannot be conceived beyond the framework of tradition. In modern societies, individuals reflect on tradition and act in accordance with it, only if it can be legitimated via reflexivity. This type of reflexivity explains Postmes et al.'s (1999) interpretation of the association between anonymity and deviance in CMC — anonymity will only lead to deviant behaviour (as defined by social norms of the majority) if the norms in the specific context allow for such behaviour.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, this reflexivity does not automatically lead to more and better knowledge. Actually, this is far from the case. Giddens wrote:

“Modernity is constituted in and through reflexively applied knowledge, but the equation of knowledge with certitude has turned out to be misconceived. We are abroad in a world which is thoroughly constituted through reflexively applied knowledge, but where at the same time we can never be sure that any given element of that knowledge will not be revised” (Giddens 1990, p. 39).

Reflexivity means everything is open to uncertainty. Actually, uncertainty has become an existential feature of modern life with consequences for self-identity. Under the conditions of modernity, self-identity is not a given and constant entity, but a process. It must be continuously produced and reproduced as a part of the individual's reflexive

⁵⁴See: Chapter Three, Section 3.1.2 (*The research process: adaptive theorising*).

⁵⁵See: Section 5.3.1 (*Anonymity*).

and routinised activities. As discussed previously, the body is an integrated part of self-identity. McGuire (2007) coins the term *distributed body* and uses it to explain the relationship between the body and — in his words — “some new category (virtual or otherwise)” (McGuire 2007, p. 82). He wrote: “Rather... than there being an fission between the body and some new category (virtual or otherwise), the body and its capabilities to interact are simply extended, or as I shall prefer to say *distributed*, across wider and more connected regions of possibility” (McGuire 2007, p. 82; emphasis in original).

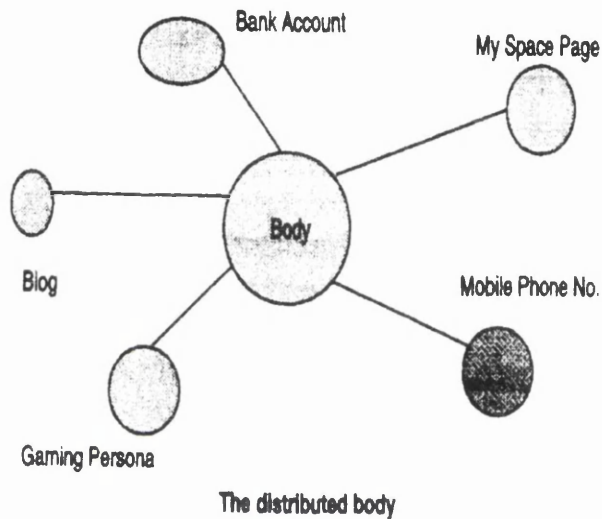


Figure 5.5: The distributed body

“In terms of communication, one way in which the body can be seen as redistributed is by focusing upon the multiple nodes of social interaction which open up to it. All remain rooted to a sensory centre, while simultaneously functioning beyond its location” (McGuire 2007, p. 83) (see: figure 5.5). As discussed at the beginning of this section, in Second Life, the avatar could be considered as the self’s cyber body, and a natural part of the self’s reflexive considerations. This reflexive awareness of the self explains the in-

tense emotion felt by the victims of the first case of rape in cyberspace (Dibbell 1993), as discussed in Chapter Two.⁵⁶

As discussed in Chapter Four,⁵⁷ the continuous reflexive awareness of the self makes deviance in Second Life alarming not only within the context of the cybercommunity, but also in the much broader context of the real world. Indeed, the ‘Wonderland Scandal’ has attracted much public concern, because of the possibility that individuals may bring fantasy in Second Life with them into the real world, and ultimately seek to act that out. The following extract illustrates this possibility:

- “People who indulge in “deviant behaviour” in SL are not discovering their inner deviance so much as being provided a means to indulge something that was already present within them. SL merely offers an environment to do so. But so can many RL establishments. We are what we are. We explore ourselves via whatever medium is presented to us that we feel comfortable in doing so. SL is just less expensive”.

⁵⁶See: Section 2.2.2 (*Deviant acts in cybercommunities*).

⁵⁷See: Section 4.2.3 (*Self-identity*).

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

Besides the body, an individual's choice of lifestyle is also a vital part of his/her self-identity. Modernity confronts the individual with an infinite number of choices, but offers only limited guidance in how to make them. One consequence of such a situation is that the individual must choose a specific lifestyle. For Giddens a lifestyle is "a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity" (Giddens 1991, p. 81). Indeed, an individuals' lifestyles are inextricably linked to his/her self-identity. Giddens wrote:

"Lifestyles are routinized practices, the routines are incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting and favoured milieux for encountering others; but the routines followed as reflexively open to change in light of the mobile nature of self-identity. . . All such choices (as well as larger and more consequential ones) are decisions not only about how to act but who to be" (Giddens 1991, p. 81).

As discussed in Chapter Two,⁵⁸ modern individuals live in the *pluralisation of life-worlds* (Berger et al. 1974), therefore, an individual's self-identity is constituted by a collection of his/her life-stories based on the various segmented public and private roles that he/she plays. The notion of reflexivity supports this suggestion. Consequently, the suggestion⁵⁹ of an individual is able to live a deviant life in Second Life whilst remaining completely non-deviant in the real world, is questionable:

- "Some people argue that their Second Life is COMPLETELEY separate to their first life. That they are a different person in Real Life. I think this is false because whatever you do anywhere and in whatever format or medium you do it in reflects on you as a person. If you act like an ass in Second Life, nobody is going to assume you're probably a really nice person in Real Life".
- "This is a tricky subject. Age Play. Does engaging in age play in Second Life mean that the person is a pedophile in real life? I would say NO. But I would also add that the potential is CERTAINLY there. In the same way that if you get banned for age play in Second Life, people are going to attach stigma to that person and it won't be good".
- "People DO things in Second Life because the DESIRE to do it is there. That Desire is real. The illusion of virtual reality often perpetuates this desire to be stirred into action quicker than it would if it were a Real Life scenario. But in my opinion is that any desire is a Real Life working of your brain. Justifying it with the use of a virtual world is irrelevant and I often think that these people would probably do the things they do in Real Life if presented with the situation".

⁵⁸See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

⁵⁹See: Chapter Four, Section 4.2.3 (*Self-identity*).

(Forum correspondence from correspondents, March 4, 2009)

The notion of reflexivity supports the suggestion that deviance in Second Life results in social harm in the broader context of the real world, since reflexivity has to be understood in individuals' everyday life, as well as, at a general societal level. Giddens emphasises that:

“The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications” (Giddens 1991, p. 2).

Indeed, modernity is created and reproduced in a reciprocal interaction between individuals' actions and societal institutions. For Giddens society's institutions and structures are the means and the outcome of the individual's actions. Hence, how everyday life radically changes character and affects the most personal and intimate sides of the individual is only one aspect of modernity. Another side of modernity concerns with the globalisation of institutions. Giddens characterises these two aspects of modernity as a dialectic between extentionality (the global effects) and intentionality (changes caused by individuals' personal characteristics and choices). On the one hand, individuals' daily lives are increasingly mutually related to activities and events taking place elsewhere in the world. On the other hand, individuals' lifestyles have global consequences.

All these explain the increasing public concern about deviance in Second Life. Indeed, reflexivity means that everything is open to uncertainty. As with an individual's self-identity, the individual's perception of, and reaction to, deviance are not given and static, but constantly produced and reproduced as a part of the individual's reflexive and routinised activities across all social worlds, including the cybercommunity Second Life. Hence, on the one hand, individuals' perception of deviance in Second Life is influenced by their perception of deviance in the real world. On the other hand, their perception of deviance in the real world would be influenced by their experience in Second Life. Moreover, reflexivity explains the harm of deviance in Second Life at a personal level, as well as, at a general societal level.

The reflexivity of the body justifies the harmful nature of deviance in Second Life in two different stages. Firstly, the avatar or cyberbody is a part of the self-identity, hence deviance against the avatar causes personal harm to the individual. Secondly, some illegal activities in the real world are not strictly banned in Second Life, e.g., child play. If an individual gets accustomed to performing these activities in Second Life, he/she

may seek to act these out in the real world. Consequently, deviance in Second Life may bring about crime in the real world. The creator of the Second Life software, Philip Rosedale said in an interview: "You see people get in there [Second Life] and do things and then come back to the real world and they say, 'hey, why can't I do this here? I really love that'".⁶⁰ Although Rosedale is only trying to highlight his ultimate vision of Second Life — not only to recreate the real world, but also to make it better than the real world, his comments may be used to suggest that an individual who enjoys deviant activities in Second Life may attempt to continue his/her activities in the real world.

To understand Giddens' notion of self-identity, a comprehension of his concept of trust is necessary. Giddens defines trust as:

"the vesting of confidence in persons or in abstract systems, made on the basis of a 'leap into faith' which brackets ignorance or lack of information" (Giddens 1991, p. 244).

For Giddens trust is the concrete link between social structures and systems on the one hand, and the individuals on the other hand. He wrote:

"Trust in others is developed in conjunction with the formation of an inner sense of trustworthiness, which provides a basis of a stable self-identity subsequently" (Giddens 1991, p. 94).

The *transformation of intimacy* explains individuals' trust towards non-face-to-face interactions brought about by disembedding mechanisms, as well as, the risk associated with this trust (Giddens 1990). Individuals' attachment to one another, as well as, the cybercommunity Second Life, are brought about by such mechanisms of displacement and reembedding, transforming traditional notions of trust and risk. Actually, an understanding of Giddens' notions of trust and risk is able to partly explain the popular perception of Second Life as an environment where deviant activities manifest more frequently than most contexts in the real world.

Trust relations create the foundation for a society's maintenance. For Giddens the character of trust relations has changed in the transition from traditional to modern period. In the pre-modern period, overriding importance is attached to *localised relations* in terms of physical proximity and localised social behaviour. On the contrary, trust in modern times is built via abstract systems that disembed relations from the local context. Indeed, individuals have to place trust in abstract systems to simply live their everyday life. Giddens wrote:

⁶⁰See: <http://www.netmag.co.uk/zine/discover-interview/philip-rosedale>; accessed 28/07/2009.

“Trust may be defined as confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events, where that confidence expresses a faith in the probity or love of another or in the correctness of abstract principles (technical knowledge)” (Giddens 1990, p. 34).

This changed character of trust is best explained by separating trust relations into two types — *facework commitments* and *faceless commitments* (Giddens 1990, p. 80). Facework commitments are trust which can be established in “circumstances of copresence” — when individuals are in the same place and interact directly with one another (Giddens 1990, p. 80). In traditional societies, much social interaction is face-to-face and trust is expressed in, and sustained by, direct interactions with other individuals.

This framework has changed radically with the emergence of modernity. Although many relations of trust in family and local community are still direct and personal, the essence of modern institutions is evident in mechanisms of faceless commitments. Faceless commitments are trust in systems not in person, and manifest in individuals’ trust in abstract systems in modern societies. Giddens wrote:

“the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, especially trust in expert systems” (Giddens 1990, p. 83; emphasis in original).

Trust in abstract systems is an indispensable part of individuals’ existence in Second Life. This trust explains individuals’ attachment to one another, as well as, the cyber-community Second Life. Trust in abstract systems produces trust in everyday life, but it cannot stand in lieu of either the mutuality or immediacy of facework commitments. Giddens wrote:

“Abstract systems depend on trust, yet they provide none of the moral rewards which can be obtained from personalised trust, or were often available in traditional settings from the moral frameworks within which everyday life was undertaken” (Giddens 1991, p. 136).

The heavy penetration of abstract systems into everyday life, therefore, leads to *ontological insecurity*. The notion of ontological insecurity depends on the notion of *ontological security*. Giddens defines ontological security as:

“the confidence that most humans beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action” (Giddens 1991, p. 92).

Ontological security is intimately associated with trust. Giddens wrote: “A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security; hence the two are psychologically closely related” (Giddens 1991, p. 92). The foundation of ontological security lies in the facework commitment between the infant and the mother. The infant would possess a strong sense of ontological security if there are various strong and positive routines between the infant and the mother (Giddens 1990, pp. 94-99). The trust that evolves between the infant and the mother constitutes the foundation of his/her identity and confidence. These would form a protective cocoon, which shields the infant through his/her life, from situations of strong anxiety and fear that might threaten his/her self-identity.

In short, “very early on trust implies a *mutuality* of experience (Giddens 1990, p. 95; emphasis in original). In the modern world, trust is a necessity for interaction with the abstract systems, and trust in the abstract systems is an essential part of individuals’ existence. However, this trust is void of mutuality, intimacy and immediate reciprocity. This void leads to ontological insecurity — the exposure to anxiety.

In the real world, although activities are increasingly dependent on mechanisms of faceless commitments, facework commitments can still be found in many relations of trust, e.g., personal relations. In Second Life, all activities — including the most intimate ones — are dependent on mechanisms of faceless commitments, i.e., the abstract technological systems. Consequently, individuals feel more insecure, and are exposed to greater risk and danger in Second Life than in the real world. Giddens wrote:

“the wholesale penetration of abstract systems into daily life creates risks which the individual is not well placed to confront; high-consequence risks fall into this category. Greater interdependence, up to and including globally independent systems, means greater vulnerability when untoward events occur that affect those systems as a whole” (Giddens 1991, p. 136).

Second Life, therefore, is popularly thought of as an environment where deviant activities manifest more frequently than most contexts in the real world. In the next section, Giddens’ notion of risk is analysed in more detail in the discussion of the notion of conformity.

5.4 Conformity

In this section, the discussion is centred around the notion of conformity. The data on individuals’ experience and performance of deviance displays Second Life to be a community where deviance does not manifest frequently (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). This

leads to a question — *Why do individuals obey the norms and rules in Second Life?*. The discussion about conformity is divided into two different themes, namely, bond and control. The theme of bond is centred around a discussion of emotional bonds between individuals and the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, individuals in Second Life. Hirschi's social bonding theory (1969) is used as a guideline for this discussion. As discussed in Chapter Four,⁶¹ social bonding theory assumes that deviant activities occur when an individual's bond to society is subject to atrophy and introduces four main forces of control over individuals, namely: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Hirschi 1969). The theme of control begins with a discussion of technological tools of surveillance, report and punishment that are built into the system architecture of Second Life.

As discussed previously,⁶² Williams (2003) suggests that a weakening of the sense of community in cybercommunities seems to be making these contexts where individuals feel free to indulge in deviant activities. This weakening is partly caused by the lack of physicality, and the excess of anonymity, fragility and playfulness in relationships in cybercommunities (Williams 2003). In contrast to Williams (2003), it is suggested that the infrequent manifestation of deviance is intimately linked to an individual's bond with the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, other individuals in the cybercommunity.⁶³ The data on the motivation behind individuals' participation in Second Life demonstrates that one of the main reasons behind individuals' participation in Second Life is to bond with others and to form communities (see: Appendix 4). This bond is strongly demonstrated by the quantitative data, which is evident in Section 5.4.1 (Bond). Nevertheless, discussions about relationship can also be found in the qualitative data. Below a participant describes about finding love in Second Life:

- "Some people are not happily married and find love in Second Life. They see it as a second chance and often end up making plans to divorce in real life and move away. Love DOES happen in Second Life and it doesn't always end in total disaster".

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 6, 2009)

A strong sense of community in Second Life can also be deduced from some almost aggressive responses that Rosser Writer received from participants in *Resident Answers* as discussed previously.⁶⁴ Apparently, there is a distinct divide between 'insiders' (those who participate in Second Life) and 'outsiders' (those who do not participate in Second Life). Some participants in Second Life are clearly offended by the impression outsiders

⁶¹See: Section 4.2.4 (*Conformity*).

⁶²See: Chapter One, Section 1.1 (*Understanding the thesis*).

⁶³See: Section 5.2.2 (*Time-space distanciation in Second Life*).

⁶⁴See: Chapter Three, Section 3.2.3 (*Discussion in a Second Life forum*).

have of Second Life. As a result, they only help insiders with surveys not outsiders (see: figure 3.25). The following extracts — although negative — demonstrate a strong bond between an individual and the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, individuals in Second Life:

- “I am disappointed that not a single one of you with the exception of one person has been kind or helpful to someone coming to us for help. So what if he’s a researcher? . . . X Came to us with a survey earlier today and it was accepted without a question. Is this an exclusive club for the “regulars” ”?

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

- “I am not sure if I should even post this considering that I will probably be “jumped on” by numerous posters BUT I will nevertheless. Initially, I was sceptical of his (Rosser Writer) intent and was the first to post. Then I realized he was serious. But what followed as nothing short of irresponsible posting by people who had NO need to do so. As someone pointed out, earlier, an avatar request for a survey was accepted and when that was questioned, the gist of the reason was “ah, but she is ONE OF US”. And there is no Clique? . . . This thread has done incredible damage to SL’s reputation. Yes we ARE a clique. Accept it. We are a finite group of people who assume knowledge of something and offer advice or comentaries to the uninitiated or “newbs”. IF you go on the ignore thread you will see chat that is incomprehensible to any outsider. I haven’t a clue what is being referred to. This “in-speak” is a significant sign of a clique. In my own work, I use an idiom that is understood by my counterparts around the world - it would mean little or nothing to you unless you were “invited” into our group by your performance and your “history” with us. Clique may be a negative term, but so be it”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

In the second part of this section, the discussion is centred around the theme of control. As discussed previously,⁶⁵ Linden Lab’s firm control over Second Life through technological tools of surveillance, report and punishment — parts of the system architecture of Second Life — could be seen as a manifestation of the totalitarian possibility that is contained within the institutional dimensions of modernity. With this heightened level of surveillance and control in Second Life, individuals may think twice before deviating. At one glance, this may partly explain the infrequent manifestation of deviance as demonstrated by the data (see: Appendix 9, figure 34). However, does greater control necessarily lead to greater conformity, therefore, less deviance? Perhaps, it is not that simple. As discussed previously,⁶⁶ in Second Life, technology-based methods of punishment, e.g., suspension and cancellation of account, can easily be subverted. This is discussed in more detail later. A discussion of technological tools of control in Second Life naturally leads to a discussion of the increasing adoption of technologies in policing

⁶⁵See: Chapter Four, Section 4.1.3 (*Geography and governance*).

⁶⁶See: Chapter Four, Section 4.2.2 (*Power*).

in the real world.

Although in a much less extent, the totalitarian possibility also manifests in the broader context of the real world. Surveillance technologies are increasingly adopted in policing, e.g., Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) camera surveillance, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems, electronic monitoring of convicted offenders, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) cards, PIN numbers, biometric recognition systems, etc. In particular, the increasing number of CCTV cameras seems to be making cities in the real world not unlike those in Second Life.⁶⁷ As in Second Life, the effectiveness of these technologies of surveillance is constantly subjected to debate (e.g., Armitage 2004; Welsh & Farrington 2004; Armstrong & Norris 1999). The increasing adoption of technologies in policing is inextricably linked to actuarialism. Actuarialism, in short, is an approach to crime control which emphasises on technologies of risk assessment and minimisation. A close look at the rise of actuarialism and its relationship with Giddens' notion of risk, leads to a better understanding of deviance in Second Life, as well as, some understandings of deviance in the modern world.

Besides these new ideas, many ideas that have been discussed in the previous sections of this chapter are re-addressed in this section. This section, therefore, serves the purpose of bringing many different ideas together and see where these may lead.

5.4.1 Bond

As discussed in Chapter One,⁶⁸ cybercommunities may be contexts where individuals feel free to indulge in deviant activities, because of a weakening of the sense of community in these contexts (Williams 2003). This weakening can be attributed to the lack of physicality, and the excess of anonymity, fragility and playfulness in relationships in cybercommunities (Williams 2003). In the case of Second Life, as discussed previously,⁶⁹ the data on the motivation behind individuals' participation in Second Life demonstrates that one of the main reasons behind individuals' participation in Second Life is to bond with others — to form communities (see: Appendix 4).

Perhaps, the lack of physicality in Second Life has been overcome by computer software, which is deeply embedded in the system architecture of the cybercommunity. As discussed previously,⁷⁰ various abstract systems have made it possible for participants

⁶⁷For example, with a population of only 9,000, the the City of London (Borough) has 619 cameras — 68.7 cameras per 1,000 people (April 20, 2009) (see: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8159141.stm>; accessed 20/07/2009).

⁶⁸See: Section 1.1 (*Understanding the thesis*).

⁶⁹See: Section 5.1.1 (*The motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life*).

⁷⁰See: Section 5.2.2 (*Time-space distanciation in Second Life*).

to establish, build and maintain personal and social relationships in Second Life. As evidenced in Chapter Four,⁷¹ some individuals are strongly attached to the cybercommunity Second Life and are in committed relationships with other individuals in Second Life. Actually, the lack of physicality and anonymity in Second Life may have made it necessary for some individuals to build permanent relationship structures, in order to embed meaning into their self-identities and social interactions in the cybercommunity (cf. Lash 2001).

More importantly, as discussed in Chapter Two⁷² and further elaborated in Chapter Four,⁷³ in contrast to a real world community, attachments and commitments in Second Life are usually fostered based on personal choice rather than geography, profession or kin relations. The data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life demonstrates that 15.9% of the participants are very much motivated by "I can have relationships that are not based on real world materialistic standards", 22.7% of them are quite a lot motivated and 18.2% of them are a bit motivated by this property (See: Appendix 9, figure 7). Moreover, as discussed previously,⁷⁴ upon leaving the familiar environment of the real world, individuals may have strong desires to bond with others, in order to maintain a sense of ontological security. Hence, a relationship in Second Life may have stronger emotional input than a real world relationship. Giddens' notion of *pure relationship* may facilitate a better understanding of relationships in Second Life. Giddens defines pure relationship as:

"a social relation which is internally referential, that is, depends fundamentally on satisfactions or rewards generic to that relation itself" (Giddens 1991, p. 244).

In short, a pure relationship exists only for what it can bring to the partners involved, such as commitment, intimacy and mutual trust (Giddens 1991). More importantly, although at first glance, activities in Second Life may appear to be playful, the previous discussion of the data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life does not present Second Life as a gaming ground for leisure.⁷⁵ Actually, the data demonstrates that on average, the participants are less motivated by the category of leisure related motivations than the categories of modernity, community or self-identity related ones (See: Appendix 9, figure 1). More importantly, from the point of statistical significance, the participants are the most motivated by the category of modernity related motivations (see: Appendix 9, figure 3). In fact, the data demonstrates that when

⁷¹See: Section 4.2.4 (*Conformity*).

⁷²See: Section 2.1.2 (*On self-identity*).

⁷³See: Section 4.2.4 (*Conformity*).

⁷⁴See: Section 5.3 (*Self-identity*) & Chapter Four, Section 4.2.4 (*Conformity*).

⁷⁵See: Section 5.1.1 (*The motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life*).

the 39 motivations are listed in a descending order based on their mean scores, most of the top ten motivations are related to pursuing some characteristics of modernity, finding friends, enjoying social interactions and pursuing a sense of self (see: Appendix 4):

1. "I can have instant access to any of my choices of things to do" (M = 3.84)
2. "I can meet and be friends with like-minded people" (M = 3.84)
3. "I can have many choices of things to do" (M = 3.79)
4. "I can enjoy general social interactions" (M = 3.75)
5. "I can have a hobby shared with my friends" (M = 3.66)
6. "I can be in a place that is free from the physical constraints of the real world" (M = 3.64)
7. "I can be known as whom I truly am" (M = 3.6)
8. "I can be in a different place" (M = 3.5)
9. "I can enjoy social interactions that are different from those of the real world" (M = 3.48)
10. "I am free to do whatever I want" (M = 3.47)

On the contrary, some of the bottom ten motivations may be associated with different degrees of triviality and playfulness (see: Appendix 4):

30. "I can make money with very little investment" (M = 2.73)
31. "I can have no responsibilities" (M = 2.7)
32. "I can enjoy 'risky' activities" (M = 2.66)
33. "I can go to dance halls" (M = 2.55)
34. "I can do lots of things without worrying about the consequences" (M = 2.52)
35. "I can go to pubs and clubs" (M = 2.5)
36. "I can collect freebies" (M = 2.41)
37. "I can enjoy vacations" (M = 2.2)
38. "I can have a new platform to promote my real world business" (M = 2.2)
39. "I can modify Second Life open source" (M = 2.16)

It may be argued that one of the top ten motivations: "I am free to do whatever I want" is associated with some degrees of playfulness and carelessness, which are often linked to deviance. Nevertheless, both "I can have no responsibilities" and "I can do lots of things without worrying about the consequences" are among the bottom ten on the list. This suggests that many individuals do not consider Second Life as a place where they can be free of responsibilities and they are aware of the consequences of their actions in Second Life. The data and discoveries lead to the possibility that the participants who are very much (25%, see: Appendix 9, figure 9) and quite a lot (31.8%, see: Appendix 9, figure 9) motivated by "I am free to do whatever I want" are merely pursuing the free-

dom that Second Life is able to provide for them. This freedom is one of the primary attractions of Second Life. As discussed previously,⁷⁶ the CEO of Linden Lab, Philip Rosedale considers that individuals “find Second Life appealing because it offers a set of capabilities, which are in many different ways superior to the real world”.⁷⁷

This set of capabilities includes many modernity and self-identity related motivations, which may be considered to be conventional activities that individuals join Second Life to pursue.

As discussed in Chapter Four,⁷⁸ Williams (2003) suggests that being untied from conventional activities of the real world may result in increased levels of deviance in the cybercommunity Activeworlds. The data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life demonstrates that individuals participate in Second Life for different reasons, both conventional and unconventional, based on the norms of the real world and the norms of Second Life.

In Second Life, many individuals are tied to different forms of real world conventional activities, such as making friends, building communities and engaging in economic activities:⁷⁹

- 27.3% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can meet and be friends with like-minded people”, 36.4% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas none of them is not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 7).
- 29.5% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can enjoy general social interactions”, 36.4% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas only 4.5% of them not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 7).
- 20.5% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can help to build a community”, 18.2% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas 13.6% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 7).
- 18.2% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can belong to a community”, 29.5% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas 11.4% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 7).
- 18.2% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can open my own business”, 15.9% of them are quite a lot motivated and 34.1% of them are a bit mo-

⁷⁶See: Section 5.3.2 (*The reflexivity of modernity and ontological insecurity*).

⁷⁷See: <http://www.netmag.co.uk/zine/discover-interview/philip-rosedale>; accessed 28/07/2009.

⁷⁸See: Section 4.2.4 (*Conformity*).

⁷⁹A reminder of the categories: 1 = Not at all, 2 = Not very much, 3 = A bit, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much.

tivated, whereas 20.5% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 11).

- 20.5% the participants are very much motivated by “I can do casual work for money”, 11.4% of them are quite a lot motivated and 31.8% of them are a bit motivated, whereas 20.5% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 11).

In contrast to these conventional activities, the data demonstrates that in general, individuals are less motivated by activities that may be considered as unconventional based on the norms of the real world:

- 29.5% of the participants are not at all motivated by “I can do lots of things without worrying about the consequences”, 22.7% of them are not very much motivated, whereas only 9.1% of them are very much motivated and 15.9% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 13).
- 25% of the participants are not at all motivated by “I can have no responsibilities”, 18.2% of them are not very much motivated, whereas 11.4% of them are very much motivated and 15.9% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 13).
- 18.2% of the participants are not at all motivated by “I can enjoy ‘risky’ activities”, 36.4% of them are not very much motivated, whereas 13.6% of them are very much motivated and 11.4% of them are quite a lot motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 13).

Moreover, as pointed out previously, Second Life has its own conventional activities, which include many modernity and self-identity related motivations. Modernity related motivations include enjoying the multiplicity of choices and instant access in Second Life. Self-identity related motivations include being anonymous; being known as whom one truly is; and creating a different image. Some of these activities may be considered as unconventional, even deviant in the real world. For example, keeping one’s identity anonymous — one of the primary practices in, and attractions of, Second Life — has a deviant connotation in the real world. The data on the motivations behind individuals’ participation in Second Life demonstrates that individuals are rather motivated by these conventional activities in Second Life:

- 34.1% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can have instant access to any of my choices of things to do”, the same proportion of them is quite a lot motivated, whereas only 4.5% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 5).

- 31.8% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can have many choices of things to do”, 29.5% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas only 4.5% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 5).
- 34.1% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can be known as whom I truly am”, 20.5% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas only 9.1% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9).
- 29.5% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can create a different image of myself”, 25% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas only 11.4% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9).
- 25% of the participants are very much motivated by “I can be anonymous”, 20.5% of them are quite a lot motivated, whereas 22.7% of them are not at all motivated by this property (see: Appendix 9, figure 9).

The data and discoveries suggest that in general, participants in Second Life are committed to, and involved with, conventional activities according to both the norms in the real world and the norms in Second Life. The participants, therefore, would not want to engage in deviant activities, or might be too busy to perform deviant activities in Second Life. This explains the rather infrequent manifestation of deviant activities as demonstrated by the data.

Nevertheless, as discussed previously, Second Life consists of thousands of sub-communities, some of these are designed to carry out activities that are considered as deviant in the larger context of Second Life. However, to participants in these sub-communities, these activities are conventional:

- “Various communities often specify rules of behaviour for the activities they support. These are more detailed for specific people involved. Other communities do the same for people visiting. . . a social group will ban public nudity or certain activities in their areas, for example. One adapts to the norms of the community, or leaves it if one cannot”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 5, 2009)

In this case, a strong sense of attachment to the sub-communities and individuals in these contexts may lead to more deviant behaviours. However, as evidenced previously, most individuals do not participate in Second Life to join these sub-cultural groups. The extract below demonstrates how strongly individuals in Second Life feel about the general assumption that everyone in SL is here to deviate:

- “Anyone who actually knows this topic will tell you that “deviant” behavior is actually just behavior that people don’t discuss in public. “Normal” people engage in all sorts of things that

might be considered “deviant” — as many previous studies have shown. It’s only “deviant” if it’s something you yourself don’t do.

Pissy answer: I’m really f*ing tired of the assumption that everyone in SL is there for fetish sex”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

In Second Life, the concept of belief concerns with individuals’ belief in the common rules and norms in Second Life. Previous discussions of the concept of norm reveal that although Second Life is a context where multiple systems of values are at work, normal disciplines by which individuals evaluate acts in the real world are still present in Second Life.⁸⁰ Previous discussion of the concept of norm⁸¹ also reveals that individuals in Second Life do not perceive this cybercommunity as an environment that is separated from the real world, and they would not intentionally do things in Second Life that they clearly know that are deviant.

Nevertheless, previous discussion of the notion of conformity⁸² reveals that social bonding theory assumes that the deviant individual is able to rationalise his/her behaviour using different techniques of neutralisation (Sykes & Matza 1957). As discussed previously,⁸³ Williams (2003) suggests that techniques of neutralisation are able to explain how some fundamental characteristics in cybercommunities, such as anonymity, allow individuals to drift into deviant activities while still maintaining positive images. Indeed, in theory, a deviant individual is able to use rationalisations, such as “this isn’t real” and “no one really get hurt” to deny responsibility or the existence of a victim. In contrast to this theoretical assumption, previous discussions of the notion of self-identity⁸⁴ reveal that a large percentage of individuals are motivated by joining Second Life to be known as whom they truly are (see: Appendix 9, figure 9). Moreover, previous discussions of the reflexive nature of self-identity⁸⁵ demonstrate that an individual’s self-identity is intimately linked to his/her identity in Second Life:

- “As in the RL persona becoming more like the SL persona? For me there has never been such a separation, so it’d be hard for me to change in that way. I suppose it could happen for some, but I see it as very subtle, more a softening of attitudes than a change”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

With all these in mind, techniques of neutralisation may not work at all in Second Life.

⁸⁰See: Section 5.1.2 (*The nature of deviance in Second Life*).

⁸¹See: Section 5.1.2 (*The nature of deviance in Second Life*).

⁸²See: Chapter Four 4.2.4 (*Conformity*).

⁸³See: Chapter Four 4.2.4 (*Conformity*).

⁸⁴See: Section 5.3.1 (*Anonymity*).

⁸⁵See: Section 5.3.2 (*The reflexivity of modernity and ontological insecurity*).

The possibility of individuals accepting the norms and rules in Second Life and, at the same time, regarding them as irrelevant to their activities, is slim. Hence, individuals who commit deviant activities in Second Life may be these who disbelieve in the general values in Second Life.

In short, the infrequent manifestation of deviance is intimately linked to an individual's bond with the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, other individuals in the cybercommunity. Without this bond, the three formal technological tools of punishment, namely: warning, suspension and cancellation of account would not be effective at all. This is discussed in the next part, when the attention is turned to the second theme of conformity — control.

5.4.2 Control

The overriding emphasis of modernity is on control — “the subordination of the world to human dominance” (Giddens 1991, p. 144). This emphasis on control is directly related to the construction of deviance. Giddens wrote:

“The idea of secular correction emerged only gradually and should be understood as part of broader processes whereby the social and natural worlds came to be seen as transformable rather than merely given. ‘Social control’, therefore, was not primarily a means of controlling pre-existing forms of ‘deviant’ behaviour. ‘Deviance’ was in fact largely created by the imperatives brought about by the transmutation of naturally given conditions into manageable ones” (Giddens 1991, pp. 157-158).

The relevance of this to the nature of deviance in Second Life becomes apparent in the end of the discussion centred around control.

Technology is a natural method of control in Second Life, because it is sociologically native to the cyber environment. In Second Life, Linden Lab, the creator of the code has a totalitarian control over the cybercommunity. Consequently, it is natural to attribute the infrequent manifestation of deviance⁸⁶ in Second Life to this control through technology. Lessig (2006 & 1999) suggests that technology is a more effective regulator of cyberspace than laws, norms or market. For Lessig cyberspace has no nature — it only has code. The code of cyberspace is able to make this environment a place of freedom or a place of control (Lessig 2006). In theory, technology may be an effective regulator of Second Life for the following six reasons (Wall & Williams 2007):

⁸⁶See: Section 5.2.1 (*The frequency of deviance in Second Life*).

1. Technology can force individuals to adjust their paths and goals by disrupting their actions.
2. Technology or code is malleable, therefore, easily changed by individuals who have access.
3. Technology has a more pervasive and immediate approach of imposing constraints on ways individuals behave than other modes of regulation.
4. Technology is more adaptive than laws, norms or markets to threats in cyberspace — it is, therefore, able to control a much wider range of activities from legally defined criminal behaviours to deviant activities in a specific cybercommunity.
5. Technology is a more effective preventative method than reactively identifying and appending an offender.
6. Technology is a native, therefore, less contentious form of regulation in cyberspace.

Since technology is native to Second Life: all activities in Second Life are carried out through technological tools, these activities are supposed to be effectively managed by technology. In short, at first glance, it is natural to introduce technological solutions to problems created by technology. Giddens' (1999) notion of *manufactured risk*⁸⁷ is able to provide a better understanding of this perception. For Giddens "The first two hundred years of the existence of industrial society were dominated by what one might call *external risk* — risk of events that may strike individuals unexpectedly (from outside, as it were) but that happen regularly enough and often enough in a whole population of people to be broadly predictable, and so insurable" (Giddens 1999, p. 4). External risk can be fairly well calculated. Currently, individuals are confronted with a new form of risk — *manufactured risk*. Giddens wrote:

"Manufactured risk is risk created by the very progression of human development, especially by the progression of science and technology. Manufactured risk refers to new risk environments for which history provides us with very little previous experience" (Giddens 1999, p. 4).

Consequently, it is natural to assume that problems created by technologies can only be resolved by further technological advancement. This explains the current heavy adoption of surveillance technologies in policing. However, technology alone cannot control

⁸⁷Notice that the terminology of *manufactured risk* appears later in Giddens (1999) and does not appear as a technical notion in his theories of modernity as seen in *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990) and later elaboration *Modernity and Self-identity* (1991). However, a close reading of the earlier work easily reveals that the notion of *manufactured risk* is born out of Giddens analysis of risk in his earlier work.

deviance; neither in Second Life nor the real world.

In Second Life, as discussed previously,⁸⁸ although some security systems, such as visible and invisible electronic fences are very effective (see: figure 4.20 & figure 4.21), the effectiveness of the three formal technological forms of control — warning, suspension of account and cancellation of account — in punishing deviant individuals and deterring individuals from committing deviant activities, would only be effective if there is a strong attachment between an individual and his/her avatar. Without this strong attachment, the individual could easily sign up for a different account and create a different avatar. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Four,⁸⁹ other possible technological methods of punishment, such as blocking an individual's computer by tracing his/her computer Internet Protocol (IP) or asking the Internet Service Provider (ISP) of an individual to cease providing Internet service may also be simply subverted by switching to a different computer or a different service provider.

Moreover, it seems Linden Lab is very reluctant in using these technological tools to punish individuals in Second Life. In the vastness of the 434 posts, 130 A4 pages, of data collected via the discussion in the Second Life forum Residential Answer,⁹⁰ none of the respondents mentions technologies of control and punishment in Second Life. When the 'Wonderland Scandal' surfaced, Robin Harper, Linden Lab vice president of community development wrote a post in the official Second Life forum: "When we have evidence of child pornography or abuse that involves children in the real world... we will act to protect the child and notify the authorities. The individuals involved, if it's proved the exploitation occurred, will be banned".⁹¹ Of course, there might not be child involvement at all. Following this, Harper continued: "There are people in (Second Life) who are role-playing (as) children engaged in sexual activities. While not a terms-of-service violation—no illegal activity—it could be argued that this behavior is broadly offensive and therefore violates the community standards. If this activity were in public areas it would be viewed as being broadly offensive, and therefore unacceptable".⁹² However, no further action has been taken by Linden Lab after these statements from Harper. The extract below demonstrates how individuals feel about Linden Lab's treatment towards age play:

- "I guess we do to a large degree has the power to define deviance and get away with deviant activities, but if enough makes a noise about something or bad publicity (age play) then Linden

⁸⁸See: Chapter Four, Section 4.2.2 (*Power*).

⁸⁹See: Chapter Four, Section 4.2.2 (*Power*).

⁹⁰See: Chapter Three, Section 3.2.3 (*Discussion in a Second Life forum*).

⁹¹See: <http://news.cnet.com/Phony-kids,-virtual-sex/2100-1043.3-6060132.html>;
accessed 08/08/2009.

⁹²See: <http://news.cnet.com/Phony-kids,-virtual-sex/2100-1043.3-6060132.html>;
accessed 08/08/2009.

Lab step in to cover it up as age play still goes on”.

(Forum correspondence from a correspondent, March 4, 2009)

Thus, it seems that the infrequent manifestation of deviance in Second Life⁹³ cannot be attributed to Linden Lab’s power of totalitarian control through technology for two reasons, firstly, Linden Lab is reluctant to use this power and, secondly, the effectiveness of technologies of control is dependent on the emotional bonds between individuals and the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, individuals in Second Life. Perhaps, it is precisely because of this bond that individuals in Second Life choose to conform to the norms and rules, even through they are able to get away with deviant activities. It needs to be emphasised that even in Second Life — an environment that is created by technologies — where invisible frameworks of technological surveillance are truly embedded in the system architecture of the community, individuals are still brought together by the power of relationship, instead of technologies of surveillance and control.

In the real world, the use of surveillance technologies in policing is often subjected to debate. For example, the effectiveness of CCTV cameras in deterring offenders from offending is proved to be questionable. Armitage’s (2004) research demonstrates that the effectiveness of CCTV is often overstated and warns against over-investing in CCTV cameras. Welsh and Farrington’s (2004) research demonstrates that improved street lighting is more effective in reducing crime in city centres, both in Britain and in America.

It is suggested that the ineffectiveness of these technologies is precisely brought about by the rationale behind their adoption in policing — the emphasis on control and risk calculation. An understanding of actuarialism⁹⁴ — “a major motif of social control in the late modern society” (Young 1999, p. 66) is able to explain this suggestion. The emphasis on control of behaviours of large groups of individuals necessitates the use of

⁹³See: Section 5.2.1 (*The frequency of deviance in Second Life*).

⁹⁴The origin of actuarialism lies in *actuarial justice* — a term that Feeley and Simon (1992) coined to describe a shift taking place in criminal process from what they termed the Old Penology to the New Penology. The Old Penology is “rooted in a concern for individuals, and preoccupied with such concepts as guilt, responsibility and obligation, as well as, diagnosis, intervention and treatment of the individual offender” (Feeley & Simon 1994, p. 173). In contrast the New Penology is actuarial. It “takes crime for granted” and “accepts deviance as normal” (Feeley & Simon 1994, p. 173). Actuarial justice “involves practices, but is not reducible to a specific technology or set of behaviours” (Feeley & Simon 1994, p. 174). However, actuarial practices, including incapacitation, preventive detention and drug courier profiles have three features in common:

1. the treatment of individuals “as members of particular subpopulations and the intersection of various categorical indicators”;
2. the focus on prevention of future offences and risk minimisation;
3. the “formal systems of internal rules, analogous in many respects to computer programs” (Feeley & Simon 1994, p. 178).

advanced technologies to collect and process data.

For Young (1999) the rise of actuarialism is intimately linked to the calculative nature of a *risk society*. Young wrote: “it is extraordinary that the academic discourse on actuarial justice develops separately from the rich vein of scholarship concerning the nature of a ‘risk society’ (see: Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991)” (Young 1999, p. 68). In order to understand this intimate link, it is necessary to understand the notion of risk society. For Giddens risk society is:

“a phrase which refers to more than just the fact that modern life introduces new forms of danger which humanity has to face. Living in the ‘risk society’ means living with a calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive or negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence” (Giddens 1991, p. 28).

Taking a step further than Young (1999), it is suggested that actuarialism can be understood as born out of the conditions of modernity. Hope wrote: “The ‘ontological insecurity’ which the condition of late modernity inspires in us (Young 1999; Giddens 1990) fuses with the apprehension of mundane insecurities, pressuring us to invest in the means of *risk avoidance* (Hope and Sparks 2000)” (Hope 2001, p. 193). An understanding of actuarialism not only explains the increasing adoption and ineffectiveness of technologies of control in policing, but also reveals some insights into the increasing public concern over deviance in Second Life.

Although the actuarial approach of risk seems to be objective and scientific, it is actually inherently uncertain (Matthews & Pitts 2001). Indeed, “No amount of accumulated knowledge about social life could encompass all circumstances of its implementation, even if such knowledge were wholly distinct from the environment to which it applied” (Giddens, 1990, p. 44). Therefore, “science and technology create as many uncertainties as they dispel — and these uncertainties cannot be ‘solved’ in any simple way by yet further scientific advance” (Giddens 1999, p. 4). For example, the British Crime Survey (BCS) as a major *technology* of risk assessment has contributed to both the definition and management of crime risk. However, official statistics provided by the BCS are heavily influenced by the technologies employed in both the collection and analysis of data, as well as, the practices and uses built into specific survey techniques (e.g., Stanko 2000; Mooney 1998).

More importantly, the identification of risk is intimately linked to the major norms of society. Giddens wrote: “there is no risk which can even be described without reference

to a value” (Giddens 1999, p. 4). The identification of risk in a society, therefore, is heavily determined by the existing political, social and cultural value of the society. The modern society is a *risk society* (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). In this risk society, “the ‘fear of crime’ has become a currency of political competition and a cultural preoccupation” (Hope & Sparks 2000, p. 1). Consequently, individuals are forced into a permanent state of risk by the ever-present possibility of unintended consequences that is deeply embedded in the reflexive nature of modernity. Giddens wrote:

“The notion of risk becomes central in a society which is taking leave of the past, of traditional ways of doing things, and which is opening itself up to a problematic future. . . . While the future is recognised to be intrinsically unknowable, and as it is increasingly severed from the past, that future becomes a new terrain — a terrain of counterfactual possibility. . . . that terrain lends itself to colonial invasion through counterfactual thought and risk calculation. The calculation of risk. . . can never be fully complete, since even in relatively confined risk environments there are always unintended and unforeseen outcomes” (Giddens 1991, pp. 111-112).

In short, the effectiveness of actuarialism is inherently questionable, because the essence of actuarialism is to achieve certainty by calculation, however, under the conditions of modernity the only certainty is change.

The actuarial approach, as suggested before, is born out of the modern risk society — the fear of crime. This approach, in turn, may lead to more constructions of deviance, because through the process of risk calculation, old forms of risk may be amplified and new forms of risk may surface. Matthews and Pitts wrote: “Changing public sensibilities and awareness, a steadily expanding and ever news-hungry media, proliferating pressure groups, and a growing body of social and criminological research have been instrumental in revealing a much wider range of potential hazards. Moreover, hazards which we might once have regarded as rare and isolated aberrations increasingly appear to be endemic” (Matthews & Pitts 2001, p. 20). Following these, deviant activities in Second Life are not activities in an environment separated from the real world. The public concern about deviance in Second Life is born out of, and associated with, the much broader context of the real world. Moreover, with the current emphasis on risk calculation, deviance in Second Life may one day appear as a major threat to the good quality of life.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has integrated Giddens' theories of modernity and the four main themes of *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity* to present a coherent account of deviance in Second Life. This account consists of four inter-dependent discussions, each of which is centred around one of these four themes.

Second Life is often perceived as a natural ground where deviant activities manifest frequently, mainly because of three characteristics: (i) multiple systems of norms — every action is potentially deviant to some individuals; (ii) a lack of physicality — nobody can be physically hurt by deviant activities, or punished for performing deviant activities; and (iii) anonymity — directly associated with disinhibited and deviant activities. The chapter has challenged this general perception of Second Life by analysing whether each of these three characteristics would actually bring about deviant activities.

The discussion of *norm* has shown that Second Life is an environment with multiple systems of values. This means, in Second Life, every act can potentially be interpreted as deviant by some individuals. However, this does not necessarily mean there is a huge amount of 'real' deviance in Second Life. The multiple systems of values may only create an image of deviance.

In support of this suggestion, the discussion of *power* has revealed that deviant activities do not manifest frequently in Second Life. Giddens' notion of time-space distancing is used to explain this infrequent manifestation of deviance in Second Life. An analysis of the relationship between Second Life and the real world has revealed that many reembedding mechanisms at work in Second Life have made it possible for participants in Second Life to sustain intimacy at distance. Consequently, the lack of physicality in Second Life may not be closely associated with deviance in this cybercommunity.

The discussion of *self-identity* has provided a radically different interpretation of anonymity, challenging the perception that individuals' identities are anonymised in Second Life, which leads to deviant activities. More importantly, through an analysis of Giddens' notion of reflexive self-identity, it has been suggested that deviance in Second Life has personal and social harm in the real world. Moreover, an understanding of Giddens' notions of trust and risk has provided an explanation of the population perception of Second Life as an environment where deviant activities manifest more frequently than most contexts in the real world.

The discussion of *conformity* has explained why individuals would obey the norms and rules in Second Life through the analysis of two themes: bond and control. The theme of

bond has addressed the emotional bonds between individuals and the cybercommunity Second Life, as well as, individuals in Second Life. The theme of control has addressed the technologies of control in Second Life and the real world. Giddens' notion of risk — intimately linked to the rise of actuarialism — has enabled an analysis of the increasing adoption of surveillance technologies in policing in the real world and the inherent questionable effectiveness of this practice. This notion of risk also highlights the socially constructed nature of deviance in Second Life.

In brief, the chapter is a coherent and detailed account of the integration of theory and data. Reflections on broader implications of this chapter are presented in the next chapter — the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The overarching aim of this thesis has been to examine cybercommunities in terms of a broader theoretical understanding of the nature of social life under the conditions of modernity and understand the implications of these conditions for deviance in cybercommunities.

The primary objectives of this thesis were:

- To identify the reflexive relationship between deviance in cybercommunities and the modern world.
- To explore the nature of deviance in Second Life.

The two objectives were translated into two research questions:

- How is deviance constituted in cyberspace and in Second Life? What, if anything, is the relationship between deviance in real life and Second Life?
- How do deviant activities manifest themselves in Second Life?

At the beginning of this research, it was clear that although there was research on deviance in cybercommunities, this area of inquiry was in its infancy. Hence, it was necessary to situate this research in the much wider and more well researched area of crime related to the Internet. In approaching crime related to the Internet, the absence of standard and consistent definitions was identified as an obvious problem. In academic circles, the term cybercrime was widely used. However, this term had been defined very differently by different individuals. Nevertheless, these definitions have one thing in common: they all consider the role of technology, be it the computer or the Internet, in criminal activities. With this in mind, it seemed to be more appropriate to seek an understanding of cybercrime by separating this group of activities into three generations, based on the evolving roles of the technology:

- In the first generation of cybercrime, the computer is used to assist traditional offending, which “took place within discrete computing systems and was mainly characterized by the criminal exploitation of mainframe computers and their discrete operating systems” (Wall 2007, p. 44).
- The second generation of cybercrimes are committed across networks. These crimes are ‘hybrid’: the Internet has opened up new opportunities across global networks for traditional forms of criminal activities, such as a global trade in pornography (Wall 2001).
- The third generation of cybercrimes, known as ‘true cybercrimes’, are the sole product of opportunities created by the Internet: these criminal activities would disappear if the Internet is eliminated, e.g., spamming (Wall 2007 & 2001).

After this separation, it was clear that deviance in cybercommunities should be situated in the third generation of cybercrime. Indeed, at the extreme end of the third generation of cybercrime, there exist activities that confront the current criminal justice system by not having any legal status. Furthermore, these activities break the relationship between time and space by distancing it across the global network and reembed it in virtual contexts of online communities that challenge traditional understandings of the concept of community.

However, the role of technology was not clear in this separation. Actually, it was not clear at all which technology was involved in each of the generations of cybercrime, the computer or the Internet? Moreover, this separation did not distinguish clearly deviance in cybercommunities from cybercrime. This research is about deviance in cybercommunities and most of those activities do not have, at least, clear legal status. Hence, it seemed to be inappropriate to discuss deviance in cybercommunities under the big umbrella of cybercrime.

Consequently, it was necessary and appropriate to categorise the set of deviant activities connected with the Internet based on the intimate relationship between technology and society, especially that of Internet technology and modern society. Following this, a historical account of the intimate relationship between technology and society was provided to help classifying deviant activities connected to the Internet into three different categories based on three different roles of technology:

- Technology tool crime
- Technology system crime
- Technology culture deviance

This categorisation separated clearly deviance from crime by distinguishing culture from tools and systems, and placed the research on deviance in cybercommunities firmly in the third category.

This thesis attempted to understand deviance in cybercommunities by examining its relationship with the modern world. An “understanding” of the modern world, therefore, was a pre-requisite for this research. The modern world in itself is the subject of various theories. In this thesis, Giddens’ (1991 & 1990) theories of modernity were adopted as a set of analytical tools to provide a possible theoretical framework with which a structured analysis of cybercommunities was achieved. A brief account of Giddens’ theories of modernity was provided. Throughout the research process, the relevance of these theories to the understanding of deviance in cybercommunities was revealed gradually.

Following the brief account of Giddens’ theories of modernity, the main theoretical notions in this thesis — *modernity*, *cybercommunity* and *deviance* were set out, and the dynamic relationships among these three notions were explained. In brief, deviance is a consequence of an application of rules and sanctions to a person, instead of a quality of the action that the person commits (Becker 1963). Following this, an understanding of deviance requires a specific community, because actions are given different meanings in different social contexts (Christie 2004). Therefore, to investigate deviance in cybercommunities, an understanding of cybercommunity is necessary. Actually, there is a discontinuity of opinion concerning the plausibility of maintaining any form of community in cyberspace. In this thesis, instead of searching for a definition of community that would accommodate cybercommunity, cybercommunities were argued to be extreme products of modernity. This idea is developed from two different perspectives, namely, community and self-identity. Firstly, the discussion of community focuses on a discourse analysis of community in relation to Giddens’ theories of modernity. Secondly, the discussion of self-identity focuses on relating an individual’s self-identity when participating in a cybercommunity to various forces of modernity. In short, this idea was supported by an appreciation of cybercommunity as a new form of community based on three elements:

- An understanding of the modern discourse of community.
- A notion of community that emphasises on its supportive role to individuals and its nature as a source for security and belonging.
- An analysis of the motivations behind individuals’ participation in cybercommunities.

It was suggested that the modern discourse of community could be symbolised by a coin with the loss of community on one side and the recovery of community on the other side (Cohen 1970). The loss of community is intimately associated with the destruction of community brought about by the formation of nation-states, which is a main characteristic of modernity. If modernity destroys community then community must be recovered in a new form. The recovery of community is expressed by a rather consistent pursuit of a kind of utopian community from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. In the thesis, it was suggested that the birth and rise of cybercommunities could be interpreted as a recovering of community in cyberspace.

In the analysis of the modern discourse of community, the identity of the self appeared to be a main theme. Indeed, if the rise of cybercommunities is a direct response to modernity, then it is possible to relate some individuals' participation in cybercommunities to various divergent forces of modernity. Actually, it was contended that some individuals' participation in cybercommunities might be interpreted as a double-edged response to modernity — retreating from the existing imperfect social world in pursuit of an ideal world, or pursuing a more extreme version of modernity to be carried beyond modernity itself. Moreover, it was argued that no matter the pursuit or the retreat, the act of engaging in an environment that was often argued to be different from the physical world was profoundly modern and, ultimately, intimately linked to each individual and his/her identity.

It was suggested that individuals who lived on the fringes of an existing community were more prepared to experience alternative forms and contexts of socialisation (Berger et al. 1974). Those who participate in cybercommunities, therefore, may be individuals who either for personal or social reasons have not been fully integrated into the life of the communities in the physical world. These individuals participate in cybercommunities to retreat from the physical world. It was argued that if modernity was associated with a miraculous quality that delivers individuals from the suffering of hunger, disease, death, etc. (Berger et al. 1974), then to those who pursue modernity, cybercommunities might be seen as contexts that offer them equality, freedom and the opportunity to achieve a stronger sense of self. In this thesis, a map of the social terrain surrounding individuals interested in cybercommunities was made using an analytical model with three 'dimensions' based on three concepts: *modernity*, *self-identity* and *computer technology*. To understand this map, Giddens' theories of modernity were applied at the level of an individual's self-identity, both subjectively and intersubjectively. Subjective analysis focused on the relationship between an individual and his/her cyber avatar in a cybercommunity, whereas intersubjective analysis focused on the relationship between the individual and other individuals in the cybercommunity. These analyses served as

a foundation, upon which a framework mapping cybercommunities from a sociological perspective was built later. With this framework, Second Life was chosen as the site of inquiry.

In this research, the term deviance was used in this thesis because of three inter-related reasons:

- Most of the acts that this research seeks to investigate are of uncertain criminal status.
- The notion of deviance brings with it a sense of ambivalence, which is a necessary corollary of modernity.
- An understanding of deviance, automatically, requires a specific social context, a community, since actions are often given different meanings in different social contexts.

The use of the term deviance was explained through a discussion of the problematisation of crime in the age of modernity, which was demonstrated by the shift in the definition of crime from legal violation, to norm infraction, to social labelling. The problematisation of crime was argued to be inextricably related to many characteristics of modernity. For example, one of the primary characteristics of modernity — the pluralism of value — has brought about a change in the perception of, and reaction to, deviance. Deviance is no longer perceived as inherent in a behaviour, but a quality that is bestowed upon the behaviour by the evaluation of people (Young 1999). This effectively means that more deviance would manifest in an environment where there is a lack of an absolutist culture. Moreover, the pluralism of value is intimately related to the desire to demonise others. The pluralism of value constantly undermines any notion that one's world is certain and, thus, brings about a deep-rooted ontological insecurity. This ontological insecurity then leads to a need to reassert one's values as moral absolutes. Following these, it was suggested that cybercommunities might appear to be environments where deviant activities manifest frequently, because of the presence of multiple cultures and an intensified sense of individualism. For another example, the uncertainty brought about by the pluralism of value leads to a constant evaluation of risk, even risk that cannot be evaluated by normal disciplines, such as deviance in cybercommunities. This understanding, therefore, situates the research on deviance in cybercommunities in the much broader context of 'risk society' (Giddens 1991). To this end, it was suggested that the possible harm caused by deviant activities in cybercommunities should be evaluated with a "calculative attitude" (Giddens 1991, p. 28) to the open possibilities of harm within and without of these cybercommunities. The significance of these points

in understanding deviance in cybercommunities became clear when tested against empirical data later. Moreover, to map this research, a brief critical analysis of current English-language research on deviant activities in cybercommunity was provided.

Next, the methodology and methods employed in this thesis were explained, alongside a reflexive account of the research process. Although there was some research on deviance in cybercommunities (e.g., Williams 2003), both cybercommunities and research on this area were in their infancy. This research was to explore what was happening in this little understood area. Although the methodology of ethnography was heavily used in social science research in cybercommunities (e.g., Boellstorff 2008; Williams 2003; Markham 1998), this 'conventional' approach was considered as unsuitable for the nature of this research, mainly because the role that Giddens' theories of modernity played in this research.

To understand links between the modern world, cybercommunity and deviance, some coherent account of modernity is required. In this thesis, Giddens' theories of modernity are adopted as a set of analytical tools to provide a possible theoretical framework, because of three reasons:

- These theories are extensive and rich in sociological ideas and provide explicit conditions or characteristics for modernity.
- These theories discuss the individual and community, which is needed for a more in depth study of deviance in cybercommunities.
- The role of technology in shaping modernity is emphasised in these theories, which makes them well suited to explore the technological nature of cybercommunities.

In approaching this research, it was immediately apparent that Giddens' theories opened up a way of understanding deviance in cybercommunities and permitted the methodology and methods for empirical research. Before the empirical work, Giddens' theories of modernity formed an abstract theoretical framework, which placed this research in a particular theoretical position — to analyse the relevance for criminology of the general social theory of Giddens. During each stage of the empirical research, these theories served as a set of guidelines to direct and shape the research process. After each stage of the empirical research, these theories were used as a set of analytical tools, which facilitated the analysis of data collected and the formulation of the next set of inquiries. The roles that Giddens' theories of modernity played in this thesis lead to one of the primary challenges for this research — melding theory and empirical work together to present a coherent account of deviance in cybercommunities. This coherent account was achieved later. It was hoped that through this research process, a possible

way of understanding deviance in cybercommunities could be achieved, which could be termed as a conceptual framework. The coherent account of deviance in Second Life, therefore, could be perceived as the conceptual framework with which deviance in cybercommunities could be better understood.

In order to bring about the interpretative relationship between theory and empirical work, this research coupled a grounded theory approach with adaptive theorising for the following three reasons:

- To allow for a flexible research design that is essential for an exploratory research.
- To bring out the fundamental characteristic of this research — the especially intimate relationship between theory and empirical work.
- To be in accordance with discovering processes, which is central to the conceptualisation of a cybercommunity and the nature of deviance in the cybercommunity.

Second Life was selected to be the site of inquiry using a framework mapping cybercommunities from a sociological perspective. The framework had four 'dimensions', namely: *modernity*, *technology*, *community* and *the individual*. Two aspects of the framework guided this choice, firstly, technological and social characteristics of different cybercommunities and, secondly, individual participants' recognition and perception of these characteristics. These two aspects are intimately linked to the discussions of cybercommunity and self-identity previously. Cybercommunities can be understood as extreme products of modernity. These communities are born out of a co-construction: the social construction of technology and the technological shaping of society. Consequently, both social characteristics and technological capabilities of a cybercommunity have significant influence on the rise of deviant acts in the cybercommunity. To realise the intimate and inter-related relationships among modernity, cybercommunity and deviance as presented previously, Second Life was selected as the site of inquiry, because it was one of the most advanced cybercommunities, if not the most advanced cybercommunity, both technologically and sociologically. In short, Second Life was chosen because it could be understood as an exemplar of modernity.

Concerning research methods, cybercommunities present significant challenges for social science research. Although Second Life is created to replicate the real world, social life in this cybercommunity is abstract by its very nature. Therefore, the social science research methods used in this research were modified according to some specific characteristics of Second Life, indicating the vastness of population, the thousands of sub-communities, the anonymity of the participants and the unpredictability of response rate. Nevertheless, not all unique characteristics in Second Life were hindrances to this

research. Certainly, technology was a great help. The general principle of the empirical work was to take full advantage of the advanced technologies available in, and native to, Second Life where appropriate. It has been evidenced that some advanced computer technologies embedded in the system architecture of Second Life are very useful research tools. Indeed, in the digital world of Second Life, *everything* is data and can be automatically collected and processed.

Following the discussions of methodology and methods, a reflexive account of social interactions gathered through the first stage of the empirical work — participant observation was provided. Participant observation was designed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the Second Life community, including its technological infrastructure and social characteristics, so as to locate some main research themes and sketch practical research methods for subsequent stages of empirical work. In brief, the participation observation had three purposes:

- Empirically, it enabled a vivid description of Second Life.
- Methodologically, a substantial period of observation provided the basis for the formulation of subsequent research methods.
- Theoretically, being in the field allowed for the identification of four main themes.

Upon entering Second Life, the relevance of many notions in Giddens' theories of modernity to the nature of deviance in this cybercommunity became immediately apparent, such as the notions of *pure relationship* and *place of phantasmagoric*. These notions played an important part in the final account of deviance in Second Life later.

Through the participant observation, four main themes were identified, namely: *norm*, *self-identity*, *power* and *conformity*. Each of these themes was considered to be able to explain some aspects of the nature of deviance in Second Life. *Norm* was identified as the first theme. Many theories of crime assume the existence of a universal value system in society and behaviours that do not agree with the system are considered to be deviant. In Second Life, it seemed that there was not a universal value system, instead, an individual's perception of deviance might be influenced by the following four main types of norms: *institutional norms*, *local norms*, *sub-cultural norms* and *notions of deviance*. Institutional norms are universal and formal rules and regulations, which are established by Linden Lab. Local norms are rules and regulations established by each of the thousands of user-defined sub-communities in Second Life. Sub-cultural norms refer to local norms that differ significantly from institutional norms in Second Life. Notions of deviance refer to generally established notions that may be accepted in many different cybercommunities, including Second Life. These different systems of norms,

be they institutional or local, are agreements between different groups of people about actions and behaviours. Individuals' responses to these different systems of norms plant seeds from which power structures emerge.

Power was, therefore, identified as the second theme. Social distinctions between the powerful and powerless exist in all contexts. In Second Life, the structure of governance determines the difference in power between those with the authority to govern and those who are governed. Power struggles in Second Life exist between *an individual and a corporation*, *an individual and a community*, as well as, *an ordinary resident and a Second Life elite*. The discussion of power rested upon these three types of power struggles. No matter how diverse the systems of norms and complicated structures of power are, it is the individual residents who need to make sense of them. In Second Life, all sorts of activities are carried out via 3D avatars. Thus, an individual's creation of, and identification with, his/her avatar may influence his/her perception of deviance in Second Life. Consequently, an individual resident's *self-identity* was identified as the third theme. The analysis of an individual's self-identity rested upon three inter-dependent aspects: *the construction of self*, *the cyberbody* and *the building of a deviant identity*.

It is natural to interpret Second Life as a fertile ground where deviant activities manifest, because of the complicated systems of norms and power structures, thus, every act can be perceived as deviant by some people; a lack of physicality, thus, no body can be physically hurt by deviant activities or be punished for performing deviant activities in Second Life; and one of the fundamental characteristics and attractions of Second Life — anonymity — is intimately connected with the lowering of social inhibition. During the participant observation, this interpretation of Second Life lead to a question *Why do individuals obey the rules of Second Life?* Following this question, *conformity* was identified as the fourth theme. The discussion of conformity took deviance for granted and set out to explain conformity, which coincided with the theoretical disposition of Hirschi's social bonding theory (1969). Based on the central question *Why do individuals obey the rules of society?*, social bonding theory assumes that deviant acts occur when an individual's bond to society is subject to atrophy and introduces four main forces of control over individuals: *attachment*, *commitment*, *involvement* and *belief* (Hirschi 1969). In the analysis of conformity, the four main forces of control over individuals in social bonding theory were discussed in terms of the bond between individual residents and the cybercommunity Second Life. This discussion was divided into three parts: *attachment and commitment*, *commitment and involvement*, and *belief*.

During the research process, these four themes were used to facilitate the design of research tools for succeeding stages of empirical work and to guide the analysis of data

collected — reinforcing the relationship between theory and empirical work in this research.

Finally, a coherent account of deviance in Second Life integrating theory and data was presented. The ideas and themes that were subjects of the previous discussions, were revised against the data collected to generate an in-depth understanding of the nature of deviance in Second Life. This account was divided into four sections, each of these sections was centred around one of the four themes identified during the participant observation: *norm*, *power*, *self-identity* and *conformity*. In each section, some notions in Giddens' theories of modernity were used to examine the reflexive relationship between the real world and Second Life.

The data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life has shown that the rise of Second Life and individuals' participation in this cybercommunity are inextricably linked to Giddens' institutional dimensions of modernity, namely: *capitalism*, *industrialism*, *surveillance* and *military*. This discovery has justified the following two suggestions:

- Cybercommunities are extreme products of modernity.
- Second Life can be seen as an exemplar of modernity.

Under the conditions of modernity, depersonalisation pushes individuals to participate in Second Life to retreat from the imposed structures and control of the modern world and be known as who they really are and, at the same time, globalisation pulls individuals to participate in Second Life to pursue some intensified experiences of modernity.

The general perception that Second Life is a “hotbed of deviance” rests upon three characteristics of Second Life in particular and cybercommunities in general:

- A pluralism of value
- A lack of physicality
- Anonymity

The data on individuals' perception of deviance has suggested that the pluralism of value — a primary characteristic of modern society — has truly flourished in Second Life. Constituted by countless user-defined sub-communities with different themes and social purposes, every single act in Second Life, is potentially deviant to some people. However, this does not mean that there is a frequent occurrence of ‘real’ deviance in

Second Life. In fact, the data on individuals' experience and performance of deviance has shown that deviant activities do not manifest frequently in Second Life.

Giddens' notions of *time-space distanciation* and *the transformation of intimacy* have enabled an explanation of why a lack of physicality would attribute to the general perception that deviant activities manifest frequently in Second Life and, at the same time, account for the discovery that actually, deviance does *not* manifest frequently in Second Life. In short, in the context of this thesis, the general perception that deviant activities manifest frequently in Second Life is not only challenged, but also explained, leading to not only a better understanding of the nature of deviance in this cybercommunity, but also an understanding of deviance in Second Life that is intimately related to ideas and perceptions that are rooted in the real world.

Technologies are native to social life in Second Life: every single action is performed digitally through disembedding abstract technological systems. Such an environment can naturally be perceived as an alienating and impersonal one where the bond between the individual and the community is subjected to atrophy — leading to deviance. Nevertheless, the data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second life has shown that although different individuals participate in Second Life for different reasons, to bond with others is one of the primary reasons behind individuals' participation in Second Life. Actually, various mechanisms of re-embedding has enabled individuals to sustain intimacy at distance. In fact, although the lack of physicality in relationships has reached an unprecedented level in Second Life, it is not a unique characteristic of Second Life in particular, or cybercommunities in general. In the real world, distant personal and social relationships are sustained by reembedding technologies, such as telephone and email. In Second Life, reembedding technologies, such as Friendship Cards and local chat, are directly involved in the establishment, construction and maintenance of personal and social relationships. Actually, Second Life is not a world of strangers, but a place where the disembedding and reembedding of social relations are carried out in an extreme form. The lack of physicality, therefore, is not a characteristic unique to Second Life. Consequently, the relevance of the lack of physicality to the level of deviance in Second Life is weakened.

This discussion of Giddens's notion of *trust* has demonstrated that trust creates the foundation for the maintenance of a society. Under the conditions of modernity, many social activities are carried out without face-to-face interactions and via abstract systems. Trust in abstract systems, therefore, enables trust in everyday life. In Second Life, trust in abstract systems is an indispensable part of individuals' existence in the cybercommunity. Nevertheless, trust in abstract systems cannot replace either the mu-

tuality or immediacy of face-to-face communication. This leads to ontological insecurity. Therefore, an individual's sense of ontological insecurity is likely to be exacerbated by his/her total dependence on abstract systems to carry out every single action in Second Life. Second Life, therefore, is likely to be perceived as an environment where deviance occurs more frequently than the real world.

The data on individuals' experience and performance of deviance has displayed Second Life as an environment where there are more 'victims' than 'offenders'. Through discussions of Giddens' notion of *self-identity* alongside the pluralism of value in Second Life, three inter-related possible explanations of this discovery have emerged:

- To participate in Second Life, an individual has to disembody himself from the relatively more familiar contexts in the real world. This would automatically exacerbate his/her sense of ontological insecurity by bringing about more liquidity in his/her self-identity. The desire to demonise others is a direct response to the deconstruction of fixed identity.
- The pluralism of value in Second Life may constantly undermine any certainty in an individual's social world, which results in a deep-rooted ontological insecurity. This ontological insecurity may bring about a need to reassert one's values as moral absolutes.
- Second Life is an environment where diversity, self-creation and self-expression are augmented to a degree unmatched by anywhere in the real world. This heightened sense of individualism may result in a lowered tolerance of deviance in the cybercommunity.

If the deconstruction of fixed identity and certainty — intimately related to the conditions of modernity — is able to explain the demonisation of others in Second Life, then it may also be able to account for the increasing public concern over deviance in Second Life. Individuals in the real world may be able to re-embrace their ontological security and sense of normality by labelling participants in Second Life as the deviant others.

Discussions of research on the effect of anonymity on behaviour in CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) has shown that anonymity in cybercommunities leads to deviant activities. Nevertheless, the data on the motivations behind individuals' participation in Second Life has demonstrated that individuals do not perceive their identities in Second Life to be anonymised. The data has suggested that individuals felt anonymised by the depersonalisation in the real world, therefore, they choose to participate in Second Life to re-embrace their subjective identities. In support of this argument, the data has

shown that, on average, individuals are more motivated by being known as who they really are, than being anonymous. Consequently, the relevance of anonymity to the level of deviance in Second Life is diminished.

Discussions of the notion of self-identity have also shown that many individuals do not perceive their avatars in Second Life as being separated from their self-identities. A thorough analysis of Giddens' notion of *reflexivity* has revealed that an individual's self-identity is a process continuously produced and reproduced as a part of the individual's reflexive and routinised activities, including his/her activities in Second Life. Through the analysis of the notion of reflexivity, an important claim has emerged — deviance in Second Life may have personal and social harm in the broader context of the real world. The reflexivity of self-identity justifies the harmful nature of deviance in Second Life at the level of the individual. Nevertheless, the reflexivity of self-identity needs to be understood at a general societal level as well. Indeed, modernity is created and reproduced in a reciprocal interaction between individuals' actions and societal structures. Actually, society's structures are the means and the outcome of the individuals' actions. On the one hand, individuals' daily lives are increasingly mutually related to activities and events taking place elsewhere in the world. On the other hand, individuals' daily activities have global consequences. Thus, if an individual gets accustomed to performing deviant activities in Second Life, he/she may seek to act these out in the real world.

Through the discussions of the notion of reflexivity, an explanation of the increasing public concern about deviance in Second Life has emerged. Reflexivity means that everything is open to uncertainty. An individuals' perception of, and reaction to, deviance are, therefore, constantly produced and reproduced as a part of the individual's reflexive and routinised activities across all social worlds, in which the individual resides, including Second Life. Thus, the individual's perception of deviance in Second Life is influenced by his/her perception of deviance in the real world and, in turn, his/her perception of deviance in the real world would be influenced by his/her experience in Second Life. In short, reflexivity explains not only the personal and social harm of deviant activities in cybercommunities, but also the social anxieties instigated by deviance in cybercommunities in contemporary society.

Actually, some of the findings from this research resonate with certain much broader issues.

It has been argued that Giddens' notion of *risk* is closely linked to the rise of actuarialism. Through the argument, an understanding of the increasing adoption of technologies in policing has emerged. In the real world, various technologies, such as CCTV cameras, are believed to be fundamental in controlling and eradicating deviance. In Second

Life where *every* single action is carried out by technology, it is natural to assume that deviant activities in this context can be effectively dealt with by technology. Indeed, if technology works as an effective regulator, it should work here, in Second Life. However, a close look into the regulation of Second Life has shown that although Second Life is totally constructed by technology par excellence, it is the power of relationship — instead of various technological forms of surveillance, report and punishment — that brings individuals together to conform to the rules and norms. Indeed, if nothing else, this research has illustrated that even in the realm of the totally technological, it is human relationship that matters!

This illustration, in turn, explains the inherent ineffectiveness of the actuarial practice — actuarialism is founded upon achieving certainty by calculation, but under the conditions of modernity, change is the only certainty. Moreover, change neither conforms to human expectation nor human control. The rise of Second Life confirms such a form of change. Deviance in Second Life presents, precisely, a form of danger beyond human expectation or control.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the actuarial practice gives rise to more social construction of deviance. Deviance in Second Life is one example. This is because the actuarial approach is born out of the modern risk society. The process of risk calculation — inherent in this approach — is intimately linked to the social construction of crime. Therefore, the emphasis on risk calculation in the actuarial approach may, one day, lead to the emergence of deviance in Second Life as a major threat to the good quality of life. It is possible that the only winner in the emphasis on actuarialism alongside the heavy adoption of technological tools in policing is “the universally shared and overwhelming sensation of insecurity” (Bauman 1997, p. 204).

Certainly, technology is at the centre of the sociological analysis of modern times, but every technology needs to be understood in its specific social context. This need is of more prominence in modern times, because during the process of modernisation, technology has transformed itself from being a tool, a system, to a cultural force. Indeed, the Internet and its associated technologies are an integral part of human life. With the rise of various cybercommunities, such as Second Life, it is increasingly difficult to separate the technological from the social. Nevertheless, this integration of technology and society as exemplified by Second Life, is not near as bleak as Ellul (1964) suggested. It is true that “Technology is no longer face to face with man but is integrated with him” (Ellul 1964, p. 6). Nevertheless, technology does not progressively absorb man (Ellul 1964) nor does technology create a separated environment, which progressively effaces the two previous environments: nature and society (Ellul 1989).

Indeed, this research has shown that the nature of deviance in Second Life reflects some broad cultural and social anxieties and pressures stemming from the heart of modernity. Indeed, Second Life exemplifies the modern “Brave New World” where the social construction of reality is the essence of the community building; where creating one’s own identity is the main attraction of the community; where individualism must be respected; where the governing body is treated with skepticism; and where no single culture can have its unchallenged dominance (cf. Young 1999)! Ultimately, Second Life is not a technological world, instead, it is a social world — a world of people!

Appendix 1: The List of Acts in Questionnaire 1

The Standard List

According to Their Mean Scores in Descending Order

1. Using Programs to take over another avatar (M = 3.71)
2. Using programs to change another avatar's property (M = 3.64)
3. Sending a virus to another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 3.62)
4. Using Programs to change another avatar (M = 3.63)
5. Logging into another avatar's account uninvited (M = 3.59)
6. Manipulating the contents of another avatar's account uninvited (M = 3.59)
7. Using programs to take over another avatar's property (M = 3.59)
8. Using programs to vandalise community property (M = 3.55)
9. Exchanging child related pornographic material (M = 3.5)
10. Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life (M = 3.46)
11. Carrying out fraudulent deals (M = 3.43)
12. An adult using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes (M = 3.42)
13. Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance (M = 3.41)
14. Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole (M = 3.38)
15. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on in-world chat boards (M = 3.35)

16. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on Second Life community forums (M = 3.35)
17. Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials (M = 3.3)
18. Getting access to private IM conversations of other avatars (M = 3.29)
19. Sending offensive images to another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 3.26)
20. Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars (M = 3.22)
21. Taking advantage of the technological tools provided by Second Life to stalk another avatar (M = 3.2)
22. Not respecting another avatar's sexual orientation (M = 3.18)
23. Revealing the real life identity of another avatar (M = 3.18)
24. Not respecting another avatar's race or ethnicity (M = 3.1)
25. Not respecting another avatar's gender (M = 3.1)
26. Making unwelcome sexual advances to another avatar (M = 3.1)
27. Sending harassing IM to another avatar (M = 3.1)
28. Posting chat logs without any consent of the avatars involved (M = 3.08)
29. An adult using a child-like avatar in a sexual action (M = 3.05)
30. Shooting another avatar in a Safe Area (M = 3.02)
31. Not respecting another avatar's religion (M = 2.98)
32. Broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life (M = 2.95)
33. Using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal (M = 2.95)
34. Using a nude avatar in a PG area (M = 2.81)
35. Dropping bulky information in another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 2.79)
36. Following another avatar around in a Second Life community in an unsolicited fashion (M = 2.78)
37. Writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards (M = 2.78)

38. Writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums (M = 2.78)
39. Dropping unsolicited information in another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 2.71)
40. Writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards (M = 2.71)
41. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area (M = 2.71)
42. Not respecting 'unusual' avatars (M = 2.7)
43. Provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards (M = 2.69)
44. To actually strike another avatar (M = 2.64)
45. Verbally abusing another avatar (M = 2.62)
46. Big corporations taking over Second Life for commercial purposes (M = 2.63)
47. Not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership (M = 2.62)
48. Pushing another avatar in a Safe Area (M = 2.61)
49. Trespassing on another avatar's private property (M = 2.56)
50. Not respecting avatars appearing to be national stereotypes (M = 2.54)
51. Not respecting the special theme of a sim when building in it (M = 2.52)
52. Not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims (M = 2.49)
53. Exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards (M = 2.48)
54. Not obeying building regulations regarding the size of the building (M = 2.41)
55. Carrying weapons in a Safe Area (M = 2.38)
56. Sending bulky IM to another avatar (M = 2.38)
57. Displaying offensive animations in Second Life (M = 2.36)
58. Threatening to strike another avatar (M = 2.3)
59. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes (M = 2.3)
60. Sending IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words to another avatar (M = 2.29)

61. Sending unsolicited IM to another avatar (M = 2.28)
62. An adult using a child-like avatar (M = 2.28)
63. Writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards (M = 2.26)
64. Requesting sexual favours from another avatar (M = 2.26)
65. Powerful individuals or big corporations bidding the highest price and buying large lands (M = 2.21)
66. Writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards (M = 2.18)
67. Writing bulky text on Second Life community forums (M = 2.17)
68. Pushing another avatar (M = 2.14)
69. Shooting another avatar (M = 2.1)
70. Impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity (M = 2.08)
71. Passing through and penetrating another avatar (M = 2.06)
72. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces (M = 2.05)
73. Using aggressive security systems to protect private property (M = 1.83)
74. Having a very similar username as another avatar (M = 1.83)
75. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life (M = 1.82)
76. Having a very similar username as a Second Life celebrity (M = 1.76)
77. A married individual marrying another avatar in Second Life (M = 1.75)
78. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world (M = 1.73)
79. A male using a female avatar (M = 1.72)
80. Using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar (M = 1.67)
81. A female using a male avatar (M = 1.64)
82. Exchanging pornographic material (M = 1.61)

83. Using a nude avatar (M = 1.61)
84. Gambling (M = 1.57)
85. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised (M = 1.56)
86. Using a non-human avatar (M = 1.56)
87. Impersonating another individual by having the same avatar as the individual (M = 1.5)
88. Carrying weapons in Second Life (M = 1.5)
89. Having intimate relationship with several avatars (M = 1.45)
90. Joining a virtual gaming community to look for an intimate relationship (M = 1.41)
91. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar (M = 1.3)

Appendix 2: The List of Acts in Questionnaire 2

The Experience of Deviance According to Their Mean Scores in Descending Order

1. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised (M = 2.86)
2. Carrying weapons in Second Life (M = 2.55)
3. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world (M = 2.53)
4. Broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life (M = 2.32)
5. Having intimate relationship with several avatars (M = 2.23)
6. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar (M = 2.07)
7. Joining a virtual gaming community to look for an intimate relationship (M = 2.02)
8. Sending unsolicited IM to another avatar (M = 1.95)
9. Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials (M = 1.91)
10. Using aggressive security systems to protect private property (M = 1.91)
11. Gambling (M = 1.89)
12. Dropping unsolicited information in another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1.84)
13. Writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards (M = 1.84)
14. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life (M = 1.82)
15. Requesting sexual favours from another avatar (M = 1.8)

16. Pushing another avatar (M = 1.77)
17. Passing through and penetrating another avatar (M = 1.73)
18. Not respecting 'unusual' avatars (M = 1.72)
19. Big corporations taking over Second Life for commercial purposes (M = 1.7)
20. Displaying offensive animations in Second Life (M = 1.7)
21. Sending IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words to another avatar (M = 1.7)
22. Carrying weapons in a Safe Area (M = 1.68)
23. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes (M = 1.68)
24. Making unwelcome sexual advances to another avatar (M = 1.66)
25. Trespassing on another avatar's private property (M = 1.66)
26. Verbally abusing another avatar (M = 1.64)
27. Using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar (M = 1.64)
28. Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole (M = 1.6)
29. Shooting another avatar (M = 1.59)
30. Pushing another avatar in a Safe Area (M = 1.57)
31. Exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards (M = 1.55)
32. Provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards (M = 1.52)
33. Powerful individuals or big corporations bidding the highest price and buying large lands (M = 1.51)
34. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces (M = 1.5)
35. To actually strike another avatar (M = 1.48)
36. Sending harassing IM to another avatar (M = 1.47)
37. Writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards (M = 1.45)

38. Not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims (M = 1.45)
39. Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance (M = 1.43)
40. Threatening to strike another avatar (M = 1.43)
41. Sending bulky IM to another avatar (M = 1.41)
42. Writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards (M = 1.41)
43. Having a very similar username as a Second Life celebrity (M = 1.41)
44. Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life (M = 1.39)
45. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area (M = 1.39)
46. Carrying out fraudulent deals (M = 1.35)
47. Using programs to vandalise community property (M = 1.34)
48. Not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership (M = 1.34)
49. Impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity (M = 1.34)
50. Writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums (M = 1.32)
51. Exchanging pornographic material (M = 1.32)
52. Shooting another avatar in a Safe Area (M = 1.3)
53. Writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards (M = 1.3)
54. Not respecting the special theme of a sim when building in it (M = 1.3)
55. Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars (M = 1.27)
56. An adult using a child-like avatar in a sexual action (M = 1.27)
57. Using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal (M = 1.27)
58. Dropping bulky information in another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1.27)
59. Writing bulky text on Second Life community forums (M = 1.27)
60. Not obeying building regulations regarding the size of the building (M = 1.26)

61. Not respecting another avatar's gender (M = 1.23)
62. Revealing the real life identity of another avatar (M = 1.18)
63. Following another avatar around in a Second Life community in an unsolicited fashion (M = 1.18)
64. Sending offensive images to another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1.16)
65. Not respecting another avatar's race or ethnicity (M = 1.16)
66. Using Programs to change another avatar (M = 1.14)
67. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on in-world chat boards (M = 1.14)
68. Not respecting another avatar's sexual orientation (M = 1.14)
69. Not respecting another avatar's religion (M = 1.14)
70. Taking advantage of the technological tools provided by Second Life to stalk another avatar (M = 1.12)
71. Using Programs to take over another avatar (M = 1.11)
72. Posting chat logs without any consent of the avatars involved (M = 1.11)
73. Having a very similar username as another avatar (M = 1.07)
74. Using programs to change another avatar's property (M = 1.05)
75. Impersonating another individual by having the same avatar as the individual (M = 1.05)
76. Manipulating the contents of another avatar's account uninvited (M = 1.02)
77. Using programs to take over another avatar's property (M = 1.02)
78. Exchanging child related pornographic material (M = 1.02)
79. Sending a virus to another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1)
80. Logging into another avatar's account uninvited (M = 1)
81. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on Second Life community forums (M = 1)
82. Getting access to private IM conversations of other avatars (M = 1)

Appendix 3: The List of Acts in Questionnaire 3

The Performance of Deviance According to Their Mean Scores in Descending Order

1. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised (M = 3.34)
2. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world (M = 2.52)
3. Using a nude avatar (M = 2.45)
4. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar (M = 2.42)
5. Carrying weapons in Second Life (M = 2.34)
6. Using an avatar of a different gender (M = 2.09)
7. Having intimate relationship with several avatars (M = 1.82)
8. Sending IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words to another avatar (M = 1.64)
9. Using aggressive security systems to protect private property (M = 1.61)
10. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life (M = 1.57)
11. Requesting sexual favours from another avatar (M = 1.55)
12. Carrying weapons in a Safe Area (M = 1.5)
13. Shooting another avatar (M = 1.5)
14. Trespassing on another avatar's private property (M = 1.45)
15. Gambling (M = 1.41)

16. Pushing another avatar (M = 1.39)
17. Exchanging pornographic material (M = 1.39)
18. Sending unsolicited IM to another avatar (M = 1.27)
19. Writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards (M = 1.25)
20. Passing through and penetrating another avatar (M = 1.23)
21. Broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life (M = 1.2)
22. Joining a virtual gaming community to look for an intimate relationship (M = 1.2)
23. Using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar (M = 1.2)
24. Shooting another avatar in a Safe Area (M = 1.2)
25. To actually strike another avatar (M = 1.18)
26. An adult using a child-like avatar (M = 1.18)
27. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area (M = 1.16)
28. Using Programs to change another avatar (M = 1.16)
29. Using a nude avatar in a PG area (M = 1.16)
30. Not respecting the special theme of a sim when building in it (M = 1.15)
31. Big corporations taking over Second Life for commercial purposes (M = 1.14)
32. Pushing another avatar in a Safe Area (M = 1.14)
33. An adult using a child-like avatar in a sexual action (M = 1.14)
34. Having a very similar username as another avatar (M = 1.12)
35. Dropping unsolicited information in another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1.11)
36. Powerful individuals or big corporations bidding the highest price and buying large lands (M = 1.11)
37. Taking advantage of the technological tools provided by Second Life to stalk another avatar (M = 1.11)
38. Not respecting 'unusual' avatars (M = 1.09)
39. Making unwelcome sexual advances to another avatar (M = 1.09)

40. Not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims (M = 1.09)
41. Sending bulky IM to another avatar (M = 1.09)
42. Not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership (M = 1.09)
43. Not respecting another avatar's sexual orientation (M = 1.09)
44. Getting access to private IM conversations of other avatars (M = 1.09)
45. Displaying offensive animations in Second Life (M = 1.07)
46. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes (M = 1.07)
47. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces (M = 1.07)
48. Writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards (M = 1.07)
49. Dropping bulky information in another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1.07)
50. Following another avatar around in a Second Life community in an unsolicited fashion (M = 1.07)
51. Not respecting another avatar's religion (M = 1.07)
52. Threatening to strike another avatar (M = 1.06)
53. Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials (M = 1.05)
54. Verbally abusing another avatar (M = 1.05)
55. Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole (M = 1.05)
56. Provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards (M = 1.05)
57. Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance (M = 1.05)
58. Impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity (M = 1.05)
59. Writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards (M = 1.05)
60. Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars (M = 1.05)
61. Using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal (M = 1.05)

62. Writing bulky text on Second Life community forums (M = 1.05)
63. Not obeying building regulations regarding the size of the building (M = 1.05)
64. Not respecting another avatar's gender (M = 1.05)
65. Sending offensive images to another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1.05)
66. Not respecting another avatar's race or ethnicity (M = 1.05)
67. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on in-world chat boards (M = 1.05)
68. Posting chat logs without any consent of the avatars involved (M = 1.05)
69. Using programs to change another avatar's property (M = 1.05)
70. Manipulating the contents of another avatar's account uninvited (M = 1.05)
71. Using programs to take over another avatar's property (M = 1.05)
72. Sending a virus to another avatar's 'Give item' box (M = 1.05)
73. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on Second Life community forums (M = 1.05)
74. Sending harassing IM to another avatar (M = 1.02)
75. Writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards (M = 1.02)
76. Having a very similar username as a Second Life celebrity (M = 1.02)
77. Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life (M = 1.02)
78. Carrying out fraudulent deals (M = 1.02)
79. Using programs to vandalise community property (M = 1.02)
80. Revealing the real life identity of another avatar (M = 1.02)
81. Using Programs to take over another avatar (M = 1.02)
82. Impersonating another individual by having the same avatar as the individual (M = 1.02)
83. Logging into another avatar's account uninvited (M = 1.02)
84. Exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards (M = 1)

85. Writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums (M = 1)
86. Not respecting avatars appearing to be national stereotypes (M = 1)
87. Exchanging child related pornographic material (M = 1)
88. Using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes (M = 1)

Appendix 4: The List of Motivations in Questionnaire 1

According to Their Mean Scores in Descending Order

1. I can have instant access to any of my choices of things to do (M = 3.84)
2. I can meet and be friends with like-minded people (M = 3.84)
3. I can have many choices of things to do (M = 3.79)
4. I can enjoy general social interactions (M = 3.75)
5. I can have a hobby shared with my friends (M = 3.66)
6. I can be in a place that is free from the physical constraints of the real world (M = 3.64)
7. I can be known as whom I truly am (M = 3.6)
8. I can be in a different place (M = 3.5)
9. I can enjoy social interactions that are different from those of the real world (M = 3.48)
10. I am free to do whatever I want (M = 3.47)
11. I can live a different life as another person (M = 3.43)
12. I can escape from the structures that govern life in the real world (M = 3.3)
13. I can belong to a community (M = 3.3)
14. I can pass my time without spending money (M = 3.25)
15. I can escape from imperfections in the real world (M = 3.23)
16. I can help to build a community (M = 3.18)

17. I can be anonymous (M = 3.09)
18. I can go shopping (M = 3.07)
19. I can create a different image of myself (M = 3)
20. I can open my own business (M = 3)
21. I can create a life which I have more control of (M = 2.98)
22. I can have relationships that are not based on real world materialistic standards (M = 2.95)
23. I can build my dream home (M = 2.95)
24. I can enjoy exciting leisure activities (M = 2.95)
25. I can do casual work for money (M = 2.95)
26. I can be someone else (M = 2.93)
27. I can have things I want, yet can't afford in the real world (M = 2.84)
28. I can enjoy romantic encounters (M = 2.73)
29. I can catch up with some new technologies (M = 2.73)
30. I can make money with very little investment (M = 2.73)
31. I can have no responsibilities (M = 2.7)
32. I can enjoy 'risky' activities (M = 2.66)
33. I can go to dance halls (2.55)
34. I can do lots of things without worrying about the consequences (M = 2.52)
35. I can go to pubs and clubs (M = 2.5)
36. I can collect freebies (M = 2.41)
37. I can enjoy vacations (M = 2.2)
38. I can have a new platform to promote my real world business (M = 2.2)
39. I can modify Second Life open source (M = 2.16)

Appendix 5: Covering Letter 1

Questionnaire 1

Hi :-),

I am a researcher from Swansea University, United Kingdom, carrying out research in Second Life. In this questionnaire, I want to learn about your opinion concerning deviant behaviour in Second Life.

Would you please help me by completing this questionnaire?

All answers will be treated confidentially.

This questionnaire takes about 15 minutes.

If you are willing to help me, please follow the link to the questionnaire:

<http://www.cs.swan.ac.uk/SLquestionnaire1>.

Your name is randomly selected by a research method called random sampling, which means your name is Not at all selected based on any predetermined purpose.

Yours

Researcher Sommer

Researcher

Swansea University

United Kingdom

Appendix 6: Covering Letter 2

Questionnaire 2

Hi :-),

I am a researcher from Swansea University, United Kingdom, carrying out research in Second Life. In this questionnaire, I want to learn about how frequently you have experienced different types of behaviour in Second Life.

Would you please help me by completing this questionnaire?

All answers will be treated confidentially.

This questionnaire takes about 15 minutes.

If you are willing to help me, please follow the link to the questionnaire:

<http://www.cs.swan.ac.uk/SLquestionnaire2>.

Your name is randomly selected by a research method called random sampling, which means your name is Not at all selected based on any predetermined purpose.

Yours

Researcher Sigal

Researcher

Swansea University

United Kingdom

Appendix 7: Covering Letter 3

Questionnaire 3

Hi :-),

I am a researcher from Swansea University, United Kingdom, carrying out research in Second Life. In this questionnaire, I want to learn about how frequently you have carried out different types of behaviour in Second Life.

Would you please help me by completing this questionnaire?

All answers will be treated confidentially.

This questionnaire takes about 15 minutes.

If you are willing to help me, please follow the link to the questionnaire:

<http://www.cs.swan.ac.uk/SLquestionnaire3>.

Your name is randomly selected by a research method called random sampling, which means your name is Not at all selected based on any predetermined purpose.

Yours

Researcher Segall

Researcher

Swansea University

United Kingdom

Appendix 8: Covering Letter 4

Discussion in a Second Life Residential Forum

Hi there :-),

I am a researcher from Swansea University, United Kingdom. I am doing research about behaviour in Second Life, in particular, about things that might be considered as 'deviant'. In this research, deviant behaviours are those that break some social norms and rules. I am interested in all sorts of behaviour, which could be seen as deviant.

There are many misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Second Life in its personal and professional uses. The purpose of this research is to ask residents about your experiences of and opinions about Second Life as a community and activities you see and experience within this community.

From today onwards, I will post a new thread consists of 2 to 3 questions for discussion on a daily basis. At this moment I have 16 questions in need to be discussed and debated. However, during the discussion you are always welcome to suggest new questions and start new debates. This is the final stage of my research. Your opinions are crucial to me and will be reflected in my analysis. Please help me with this research by giving me your opinion. If you do not wish to share your opinion with other residents on this forum, you are always welcome to email the answers to me at

RosserWriter@swansea.ac.uk.

More details about this research can be found on the project web page:

<http://www.swan.ac.uk/SecondLifeResearch>

Yours

Rosser Writer Researcher

Swansea University
United Kingdom

Appendix 9: Figures and Tables in Chapter Five

Motivations

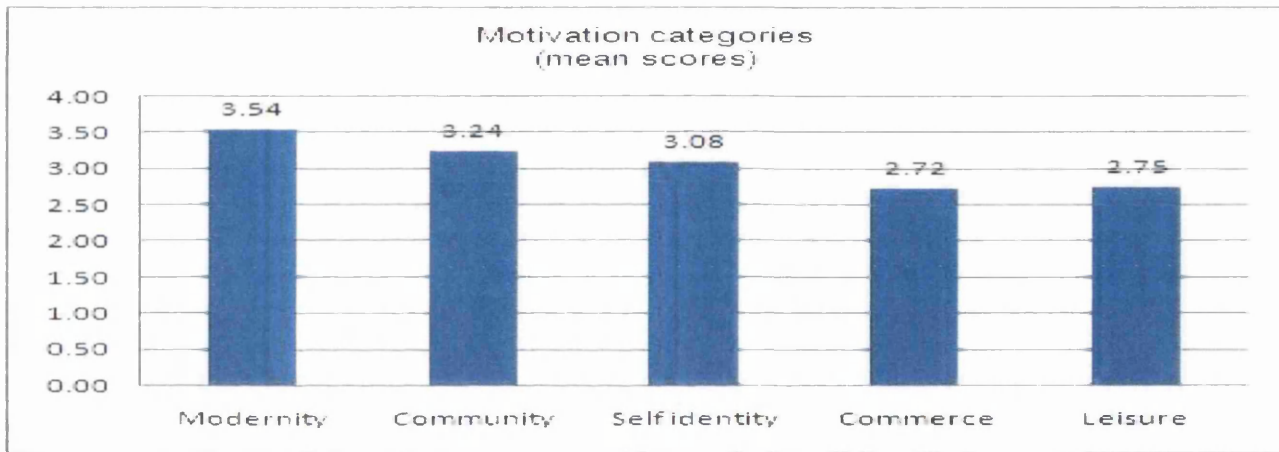


Figure 1: Motivation categories (mean scores, N = 44)

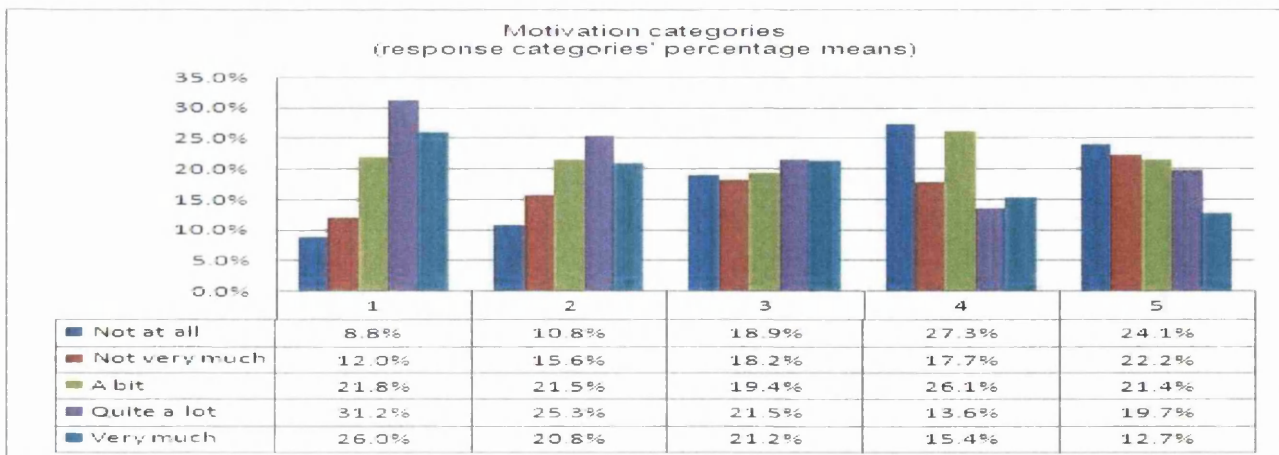


Figure 2: Motivation categories (response categories' percentage means)

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 ModernityMean - CommunityMean	.29568	.76990	.11607	.06161	.52975	2.548	43	.015
Pair 2 ModernityMean - SelfIdentityMean	.47058	.73450	.11073	.24727	.69389	4.250	43	.000
Pair 3 ModernityMean - CommerceMean	.80442	1.23691	.18647	.42836	1.18047	4.314	43	.000
Pair 4 ModernityMean - LeisureMean	.77790	.73453	.11073	.55458	1.00122	7.025	43	.000
Pair 5 CommunityMean - SelfIdentityMean	.17490	.90810	.13690	-.10119	.45098	1.278	43	.208
Pair 6 CommunityMean - CommerceMean	.50873	1.13905	.17172	.16243	.85504	2.963	43	.005
Pair 7 CommunityMean - LeisureMean	.48222	.61487	.09270	.29528	.66916	5.202	43	.000
Pair 8 SelfIdentityMean - CommerceMean	.33384	1.27640	.19242	-.05422	.72190	1.735	43	.090
Pair 9 SelfIdentityMean - LeisureMean	.30732	.89356	.13471	.03566	.57899	2.281	43	.028
Pair 10 CommerceMean - LeisureMean	-.02652	1.11511	.16811	-.36554	.31251	-.158	43	.875

Figure 3: Motivation categories: paired samples test

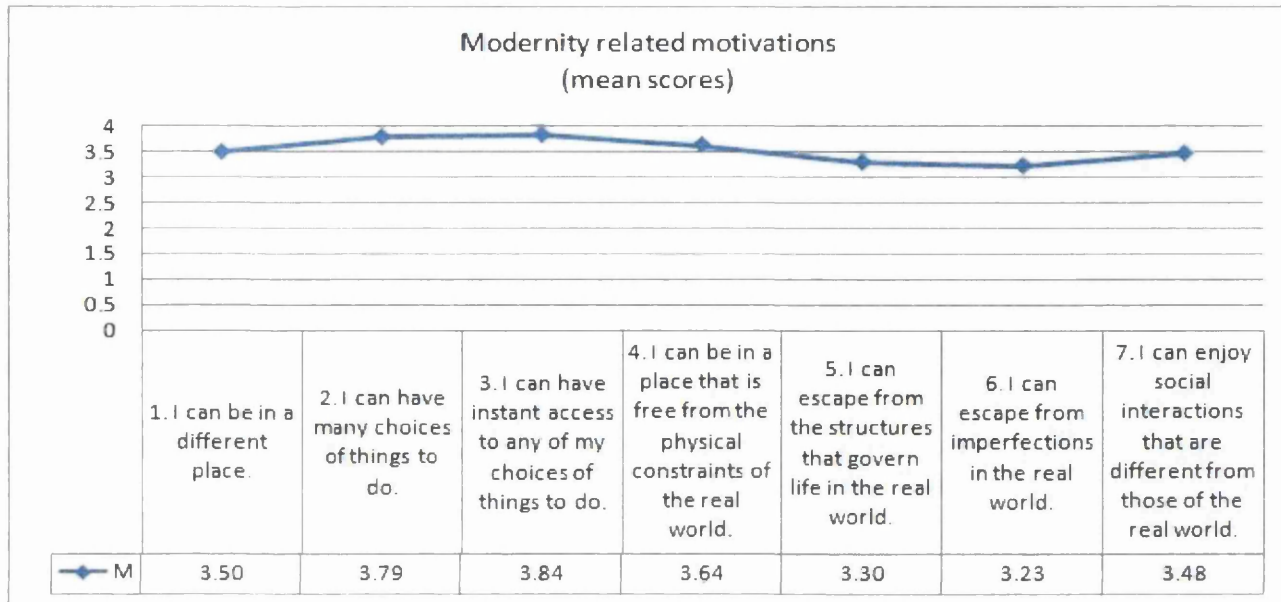


Figure 4: Modernity related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)

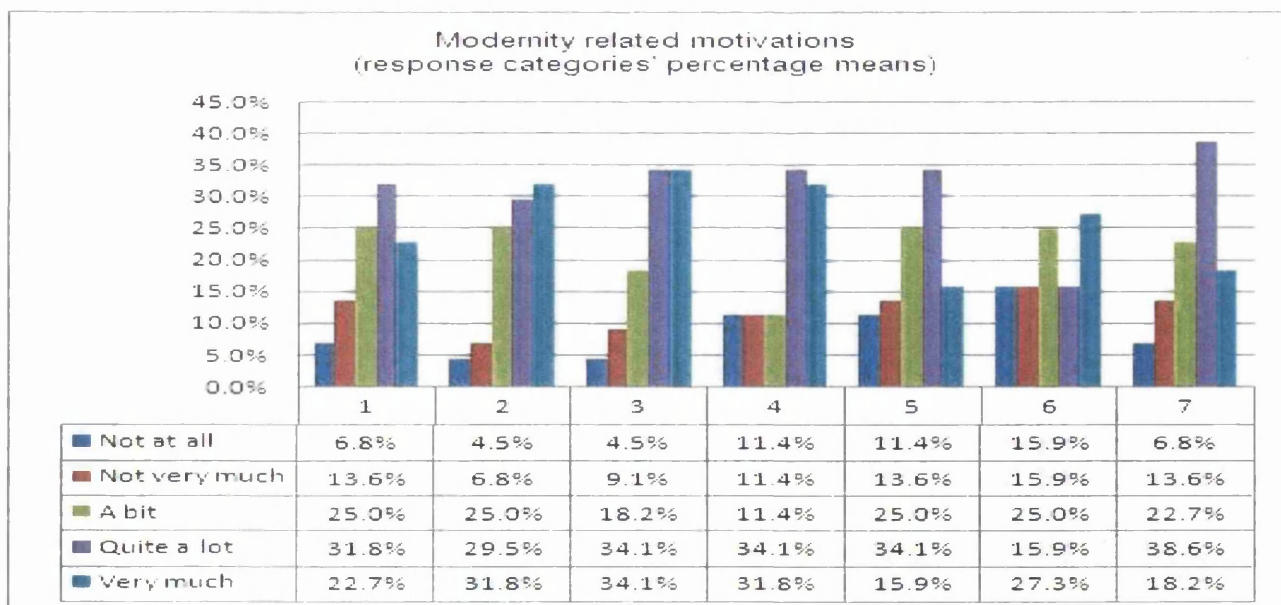


Figure 5: Modernity related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 4)

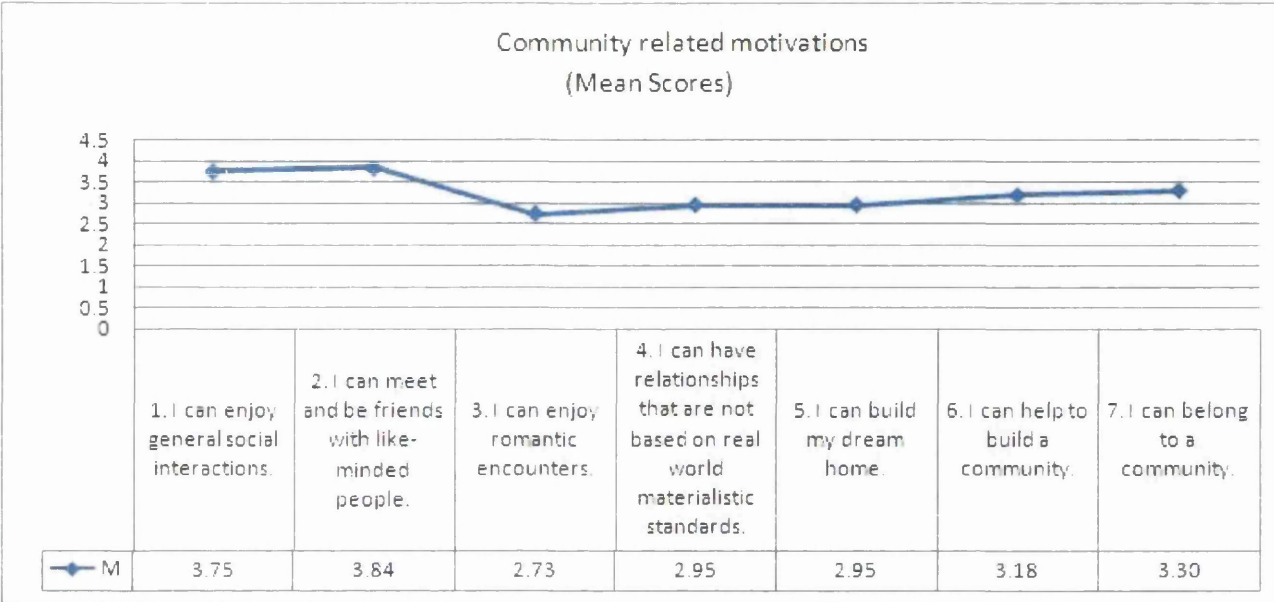


Figure 6: Community related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)

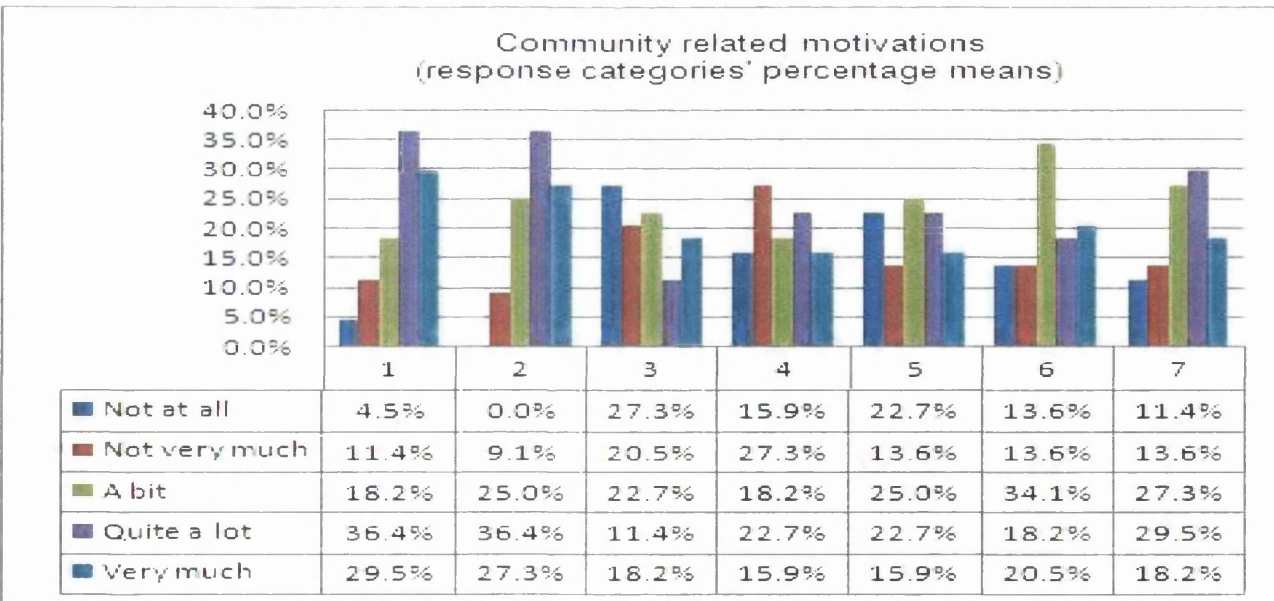


Figure 7: Community related motivations (response categories' percentage means)(The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 6)

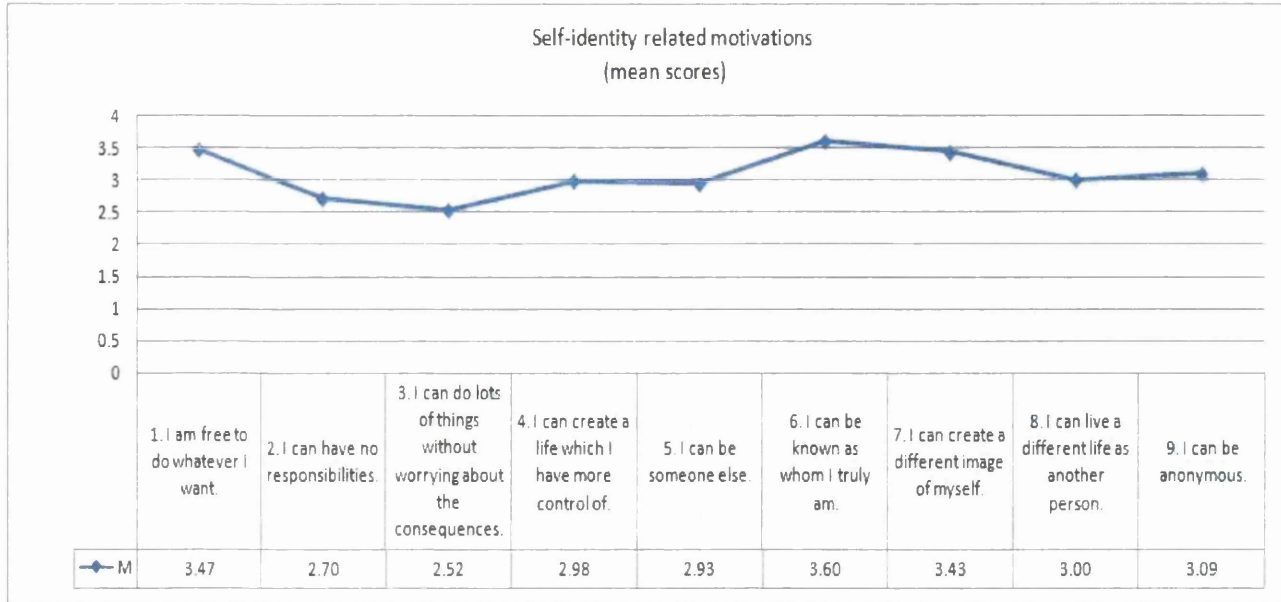


Figure 8: Self-identity related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)

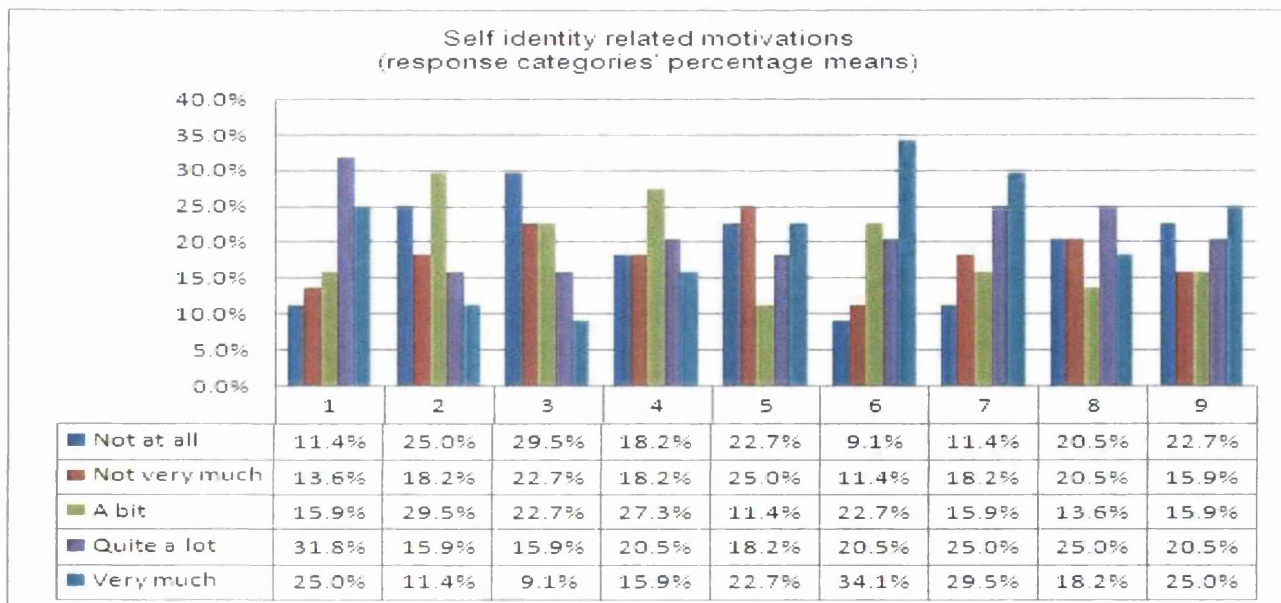


Figure 9: Self-identity related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 8)

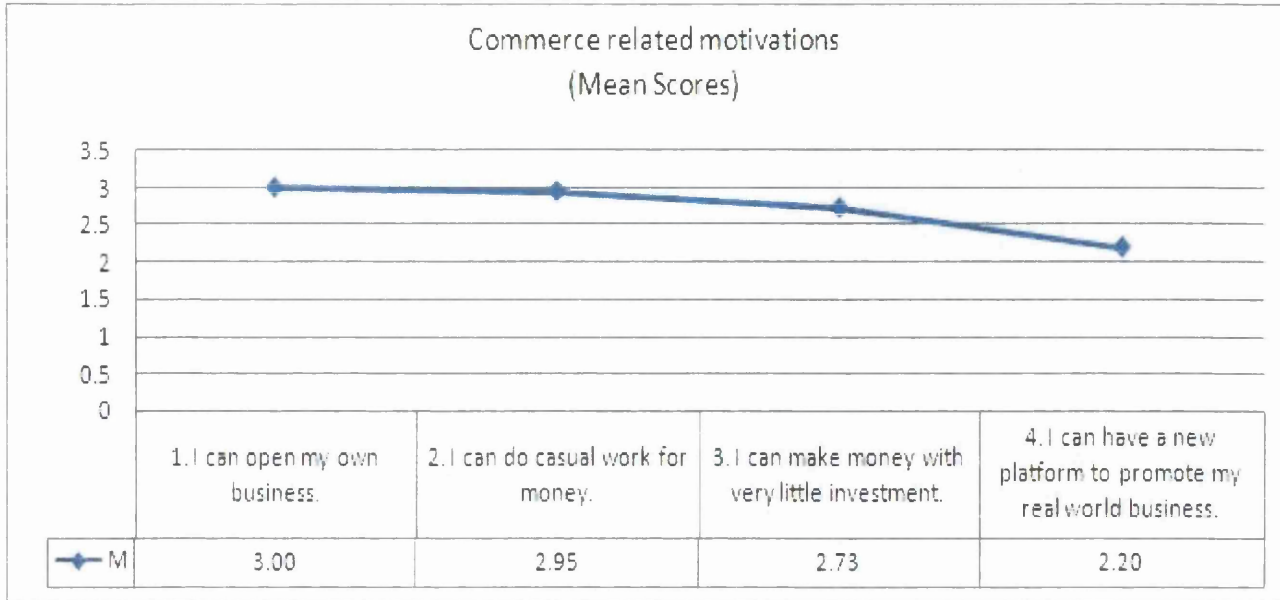


Figure 10: Commerce related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)

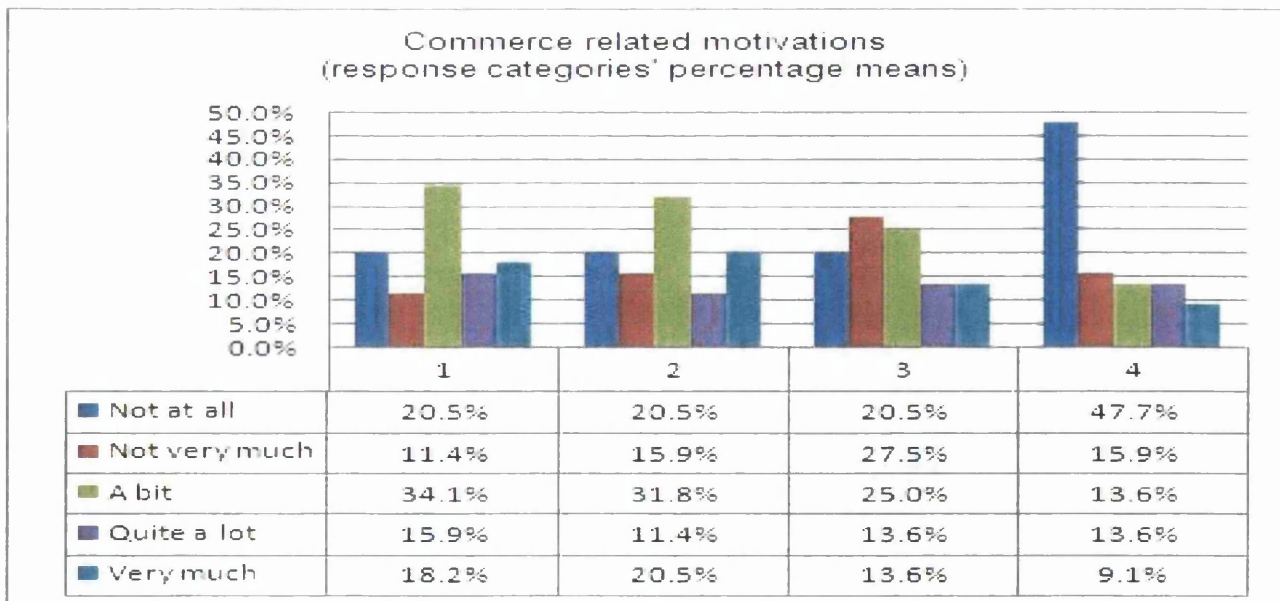


Figure 11: Commerce related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 10)

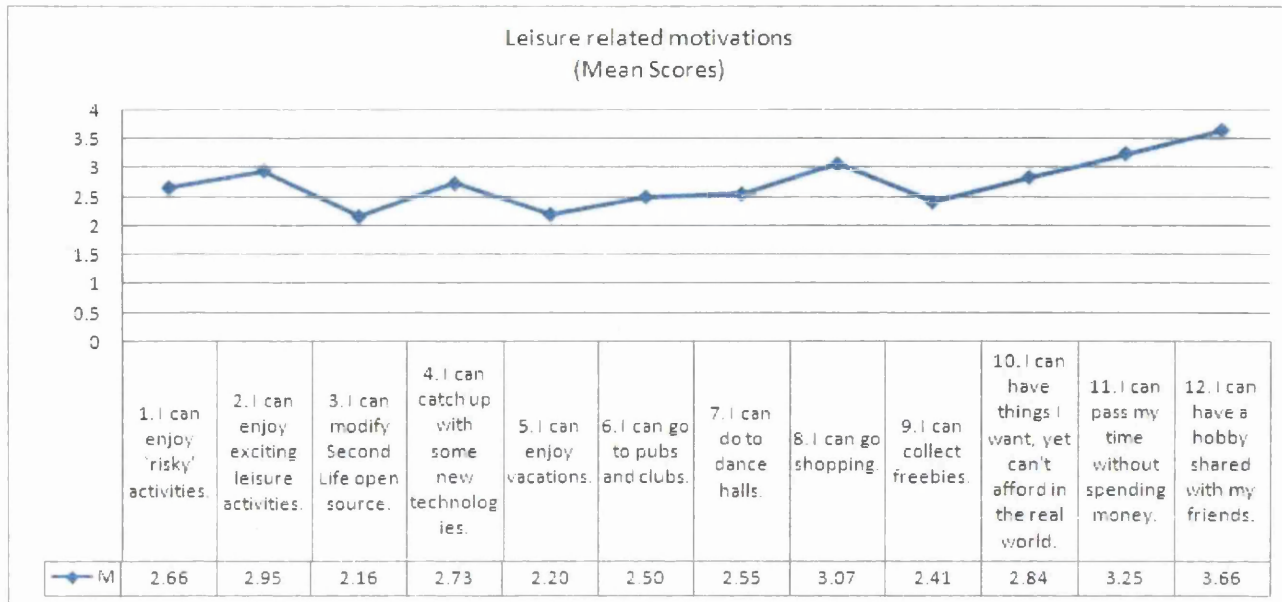


Figure 12: Leisure related motivations (mean scores, N = 44)

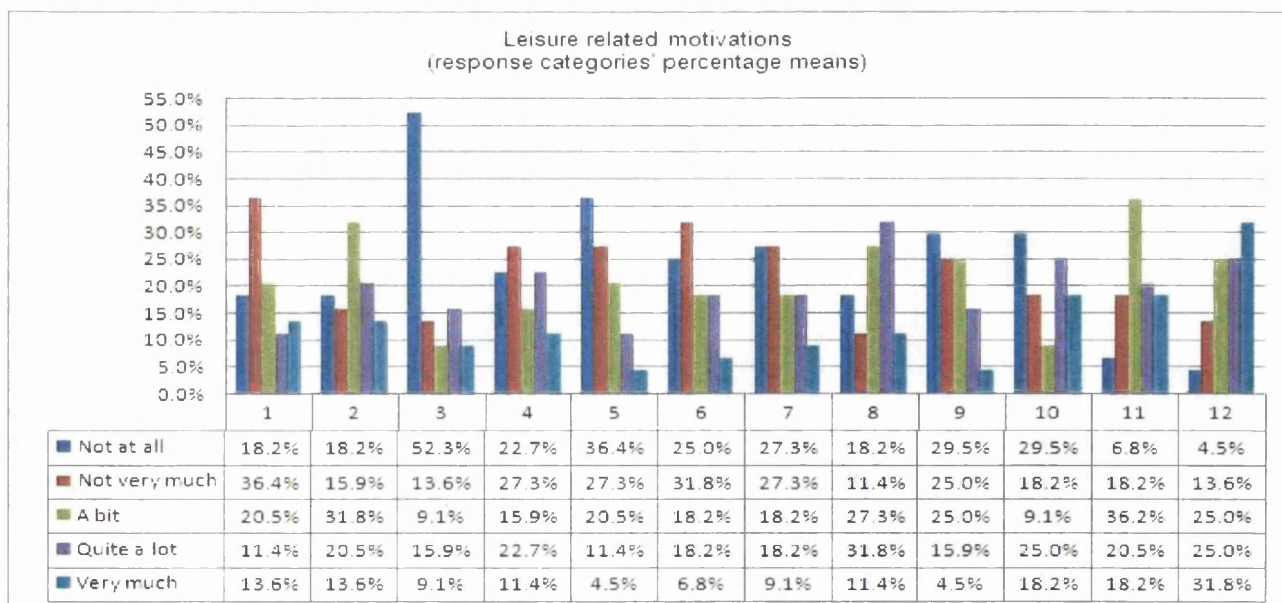


Figure 13: Leisure related motivations (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the motivations in figure 12)

Nature of deviance

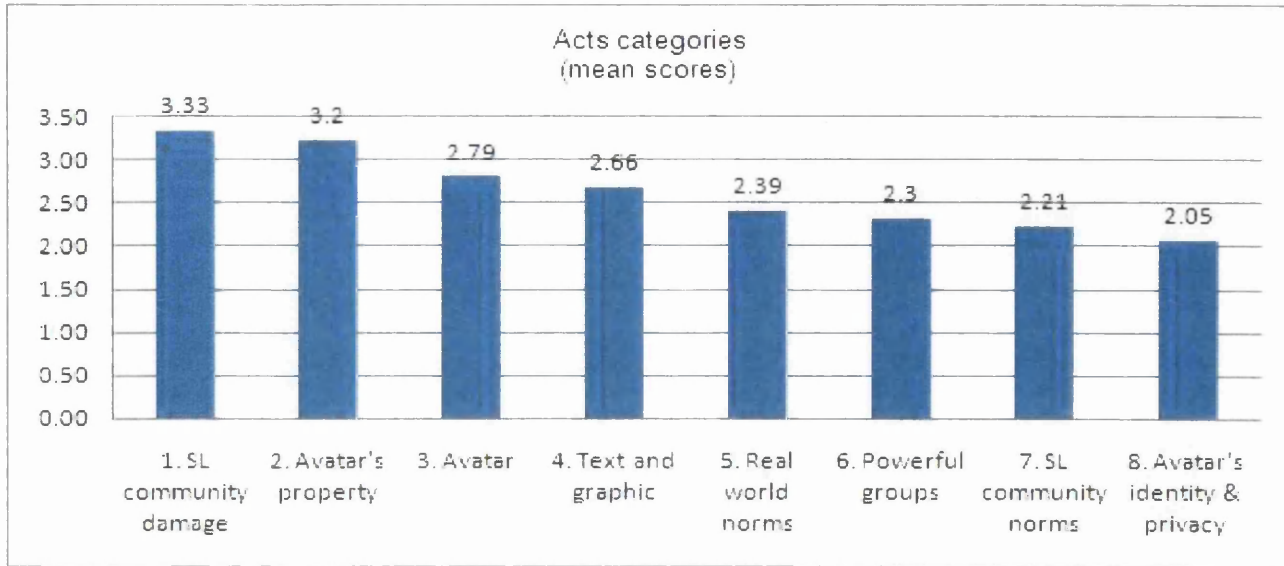


Figure 14: Nature: acts categories (mean scores, N = 44) (The mean scores are calculated after deleting 5 = Don't know)

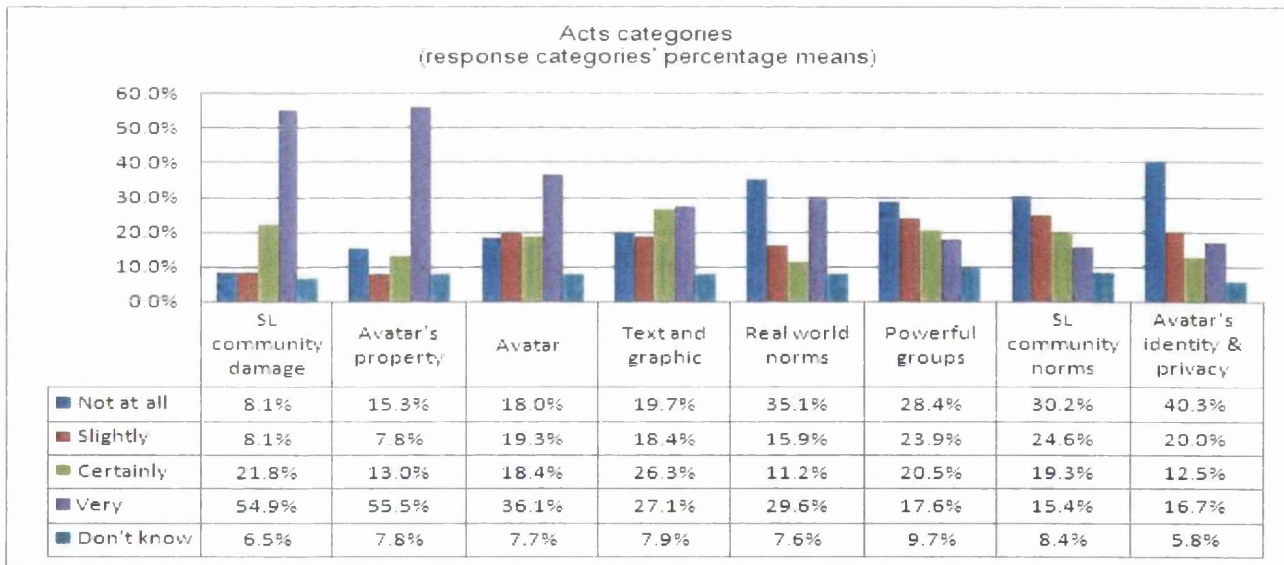


Figure 15: Nature: acts categories (response categories' percentage means)

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Avatar - AvatarProperty	-.35614	.82093	.12376	-.60572	-.10655	-2.878	43	.006
Pair 2	Avatar - AvatarIdentityPrivacy	.71864	.66181	.09977	.51743	.91984	7.203	43	.000
Pair 3	Avatar - SLCommunityDamage	-.52682	.76987	.11608	-.76068	-.29276	-4.539	43	.000
Pair 4	Avatar - SLCommunityNorms	.57273	.67913	.10238	.36625	.77920	5.594	43	.000
Pair 5	Avatar - RealWorldNorms	.35858	.62487	.09420	.16888	.54834	3.809	43	.000
Pair 6	Avatar - PowerfulGroups	.48409	1.05691	.15934	.16276	.80542	3.038	43	.004
Pair 7	Avatar - TextandGraphic	.12455	.54354	.08194	-.04071	.28580	1.520	43	.136
Pair 8	AvatarProperty - AvatarIdentityPrivacy	1.07477	.92515	.13947	.79350	1.35604	7.706	43	.000
Pair 9	AvatarProperty - SLCommunityDamage	-.17058	.94075	.14182	-.45670	.11533	-1.203	43	.235
Pair 10	AvatarProperty - SLCommunityNorms	.92855	1.00097	.15090	.62454	1.23318	6.155	43	.000
Pair 11	AvatarProperty - RealWorldNorms	.71500	.75364	.11362	.48587	.94413	6.293	43	.000
Pair 12	AvatarProperty - PowerfulGroups	.84023	1.36125	.20522	.42637	1.25409	4.094	43	.000
Pair 13	AvatarProperty - TextandGraphic	.48068	.89295	.13462	.20920	.75216	3.571	43	.001
Pair 14	AvatarIdentityPrivacy - SLCommunityDamage	-1.24545	1.01679	.15329	-1.55459	-.93632	-8.125	43	.000
Pair 15	AvatarIdentityPrivacy - SLCommunityNorms	-.14591	.61192	.09225	-.33195	.04013	-1.582	43	.121
Pair 16	AvatarIdentityPrivacy - RealWorldNorms	-.35977	.54485	.03214	-.52542	-.19412	-4.380	43	.000
Pair 17	AvatarIdentityPrivacy - PowerfulGroups	-.23455	1.14414	.17249	-.58240	.11330	-1.360	43	.181
Pair 18	AvatarIdentityPrivacy - TextandGraphic	-.59409	.74724	.11265	-.82127	-.36691	-5.274	43	.000
Pair 19	SLCommunityDamage - SLCommunityNorms	1.09955	.90468	.13639	.82450	1.37459	8.062	43	.000
Pair 20	SLCommunityDamage - RealWorldNorms	.88568	.73570	.11091	.66201	1.10936	7.985	43	.000
Pair 21	SLCommunityDamage - PowerfulGroups	1.01091	1.00501	.15151	.70536	1.31646	6.672	43	.000
Pair 22	SLCommunityDamage - TextandGraphic	.65136	.67760	.10215	.44536	.85737	6.376	43	.000
Pair 23	SLCommunityNorms - RealWorldNorms	-.21386	.61203	.09227	-.39994	-.02779	-2.318	43	.025
Pair 24	SLCommunityNorms - PowerfulGroups	-.08864	1.11004	.16735	-.42612	.24585	-.530	43	.599
Pair 25	SLCommunityNorms - TextandGraphic	-.44818	.65589	.09688	-.64759	-.24877	-4.533	43	.000
Pair 26	RealWorldNorms - PowerfulGroups	.12523	1.13836	.17161	-.22087	.47132	.730	43	.470
Pair 27	RealWorldNorms - TextandGraphic	-.23432	.61344	.09248	-.42082	-.04782	-2.534	43	.015
Pair 28	PowerfulGroups - TextandGraphic	-.35955	1.03693	.15632	-.67480	-.04429	-2.300	43	.026

Figure 16: Nature: acts categories (paired samples test)

Table 1: SL community damage related acts

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Using programs to vandalise community property.	3.55
2. Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life.	3.46
3. Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance.	3.41
4. Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole.	3.39
5. Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials.	3.30
6. Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars.	3.22
7. Broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life.	2.95

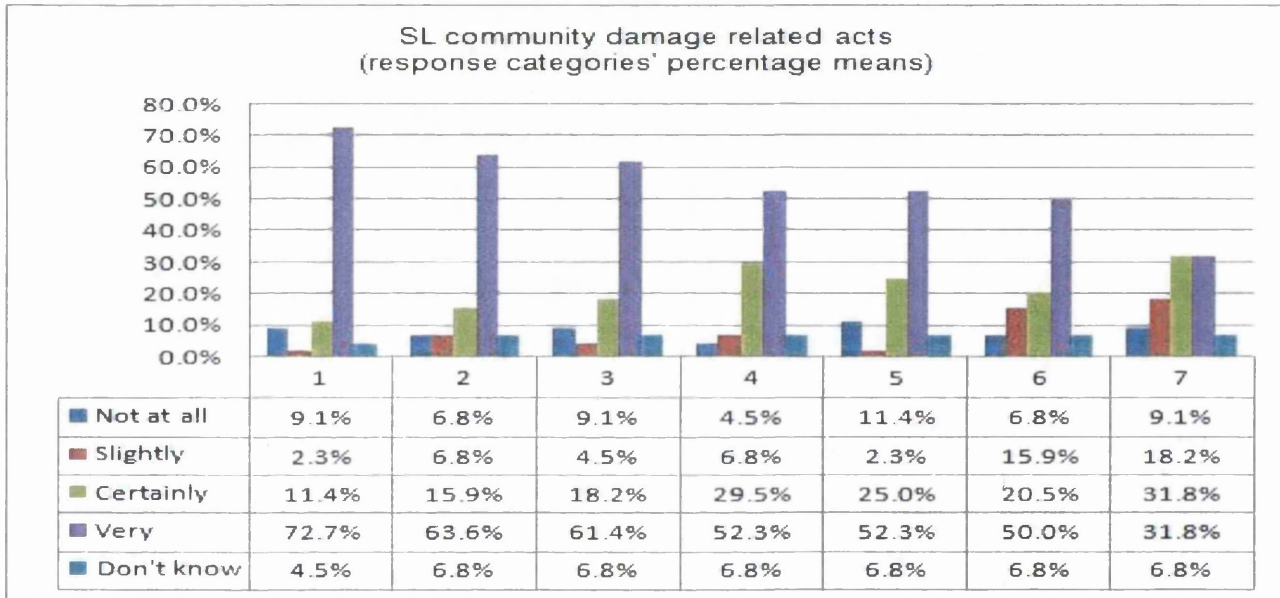


Figure 17: SL community damage related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 1)

Table 2: Avatar's property related acts

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Sending a virus to another avatar's 'Give item' box.	3.62
2. Logging into another avatar's account uninvited.	3.59
3. Manipulating the contents of another avatar's account uninvited.	3.59
4. Using programs to change another avatar's property.	3.64
5. Using programs to take over another avatar's property.	3.59
6. Trespassing on another avatar's private property.	2.56
7. Using aggressive security systems to protect private property.	1.83

**Avatar property related acts
(response categories' percentage means)**

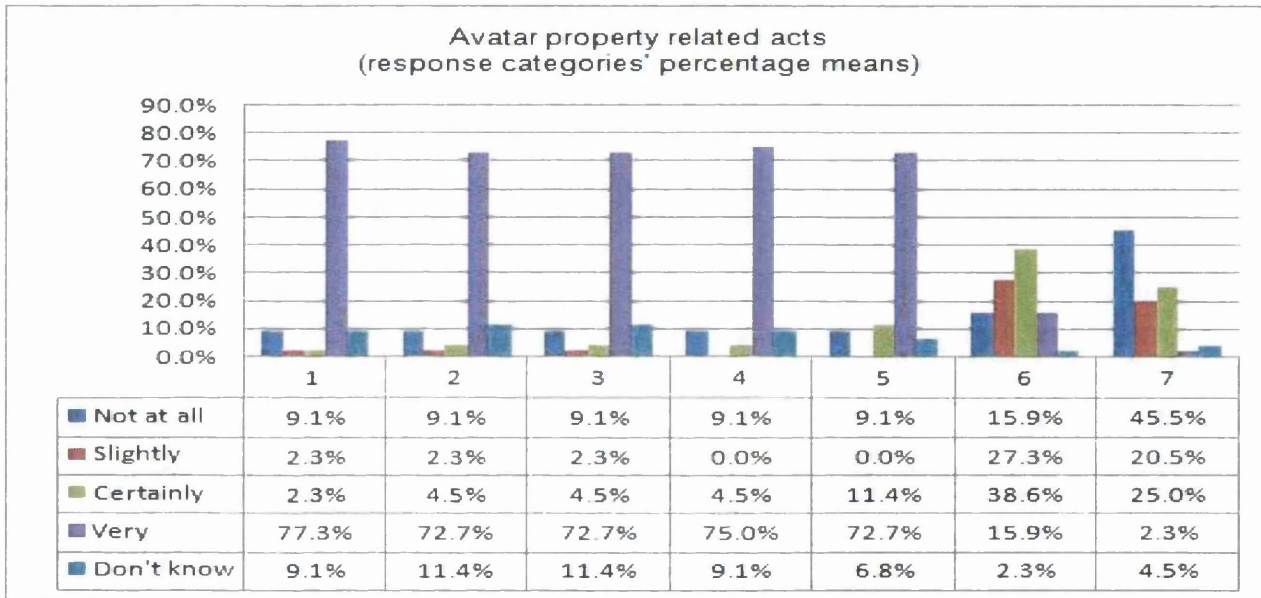


Figure 18: Avatar's property related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 2)

Table 3: Avatar related acts

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Using Programs to take over another avatar.	3.71
2. Using Programs to change another avatar.	3.63
3. Taking advantage of the technological tools provided by Second Life to stalk another avatar.	3.20
4. Not respecting another avatar's race or ethnicity.	3.10
5. Not respecting another avatar's gender.	3.10
6. Not respecting another avatar's sexual orientation.	3.18
7. Making unwelcome sexual advances to another avatar.	3.10
8. Shooting another avatar in a Safe Area.	3.02
9. Not respecting another avatar's religion.	2.98
10. Not respecting 'unusual' avatars.	2.70
11. Following another avatar around in a Second Life community in an unsolicited fashion.	2.78
12. Not respecting avatars appearing to be national stereotypes.	2.54
13. Verbally abusing another avatar.	2.62
14. Pushing another avatar in a Safe Area.	2.61
15. To actually strike another avatar.	2.64
16. Carrying weapons in a Safe Area.	2.38
17. Threatening to strike another avatar.	2.30
18. Shooting another avatar.	2.10
19. Pushing another avatar.	2.14
20. Passing through and penetrating another avatar.	2.06

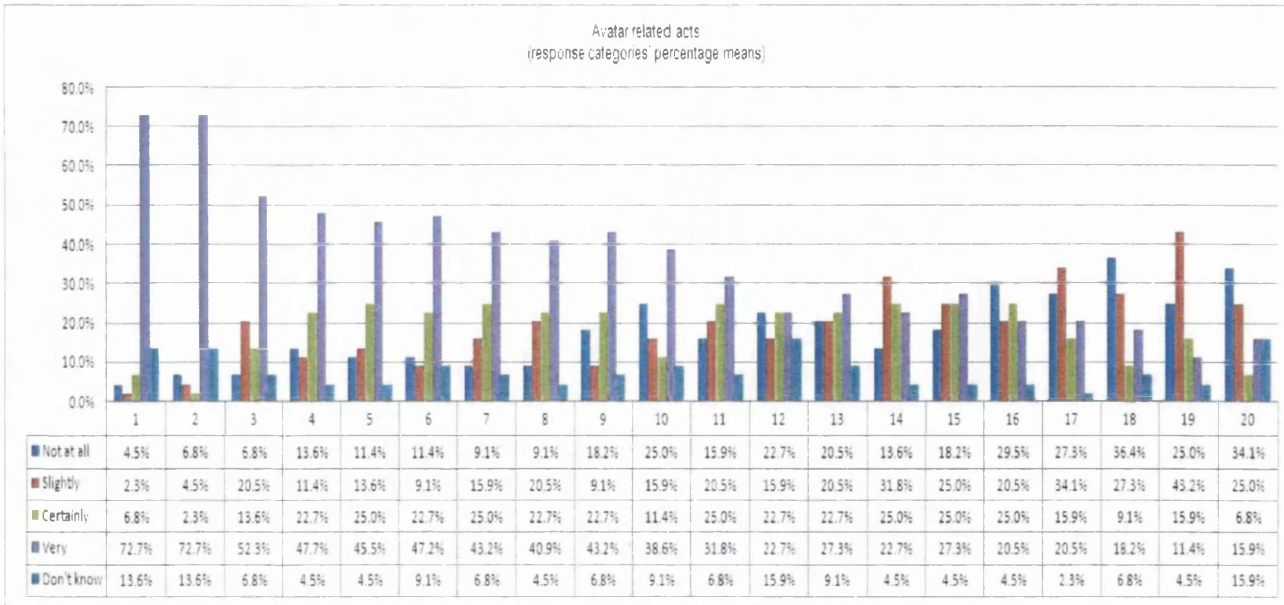
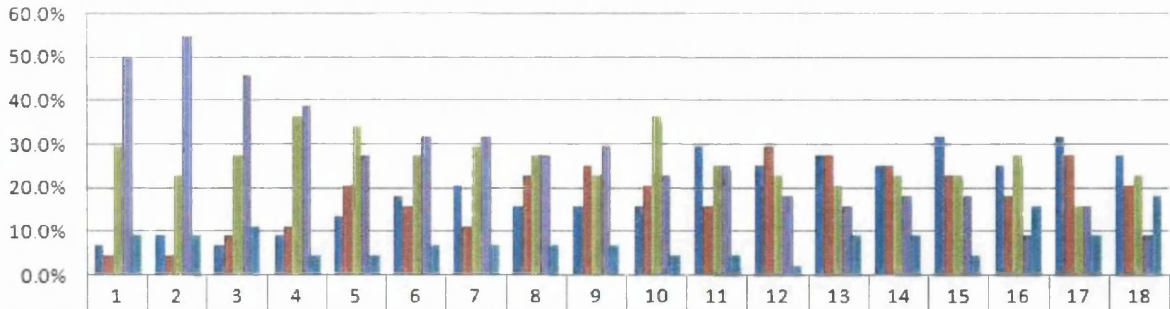


Figure 19: Avatar related acts (response categories' percentage means) (response categories' percentage means)
(The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 3)

Table 4: Text & graphic related

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on in-world chat boards.	3.35
2. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on Second Life community forums.	3.35
3. Sending offensive images to another avatar's 'Give item' box.	3.26
4. Sending harassing IM to another avatar.	3.10
5. Dropping bulky information in another avatar's 'Give item' box.	2.79
6. Writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards.	2.78
7. Writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums.	2.78
8. Dropping unsolicited information in another avatar's 'Give item' box.	2.71
9. Writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards.	2.71
10. Provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards.	2.69
11. Exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards.	2.48
12. Displaying offensive animations in Second Life.	2.36
13. Sending unsolicited IM to another avatar.	2.28
14. Sending bulky IM to another avatar.	2.38
15. Sending IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words to another avatar.	2.29
16. Writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards.	2.26
17. Writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards.	2.18
18. Writing bulky text on Second Life community forums.	2.17

Text and graphic related acts
(response categories' percentage means)



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Not at all	6.8%	9.1%	6.8%	9.1%	13.6%	18.2%	20.5%	15.9%	15.9%	15.9%	29.5%	25.0%	27.3%	25.0%	31.8%	25.0%	31.8%	27.3%
Slightly	4.5%	4.5%	9.1%	11.4%	20.5%	15.9%	11.4%	22.7%	25.0%	20.5%	15.9%	29.5%	27.3%	25.0%	22.7%	18.2%	27.3%	20.5%
Certainly	29.5%	22.7%	27.3%	36.4%	34.1%	27.3%	29.5%	27.3%	22.7%	36.4%	25.0%	22.7%	20.5%	22.7%	22.7%	27.3%	15.9%	22.7%
Very	50.0%	54.5%	45.5%	38.6%	27.3%	31.8%	31.8%	27.3%	29.5%	22.7%	25.0%	18.2%	15.9%	18.2%	18.2%	9.1%	15.9%	9.1%
Don't know	9.1%	9.1%	11.4%	4.5%	4.5%	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%	4.5%	4.5%	2.3%	9.1%	9.1%	4.5%	15.9%	9.1%	18.2%

Figure 20: Text & graphic related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 4)

Table 5: Real world norms related acts

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Exchanging child related pornographic material.	3.50
2. Carrying out fraudulent deals.	3.43
3. An adult using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes.	3.42
4. An adult using a child-like avatar in a sexual action.	3.05
5. Using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal.	2.95
6. Requesting sexual favours from another avatar.	2.26
7. A married individual marrying another avatar in Second Life.	1.75
8. Gambling.	1.57
9. Having intimate relationship with several avatars.	1.45
10. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar.	1.30
11. Exchanging pornographic material.	1.61

Real world norms related acts
(response categories' percentage means)

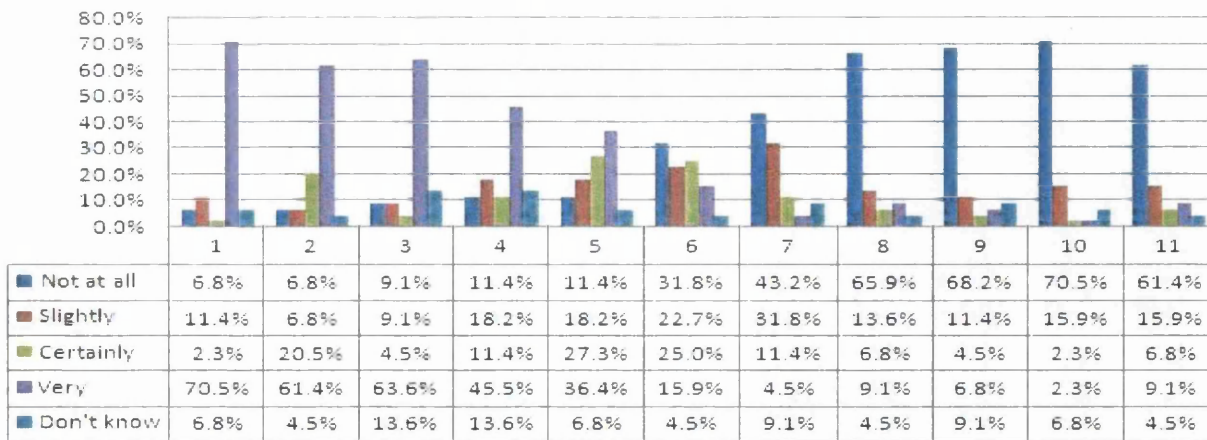


Figure 21: Real world norms related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 5)

Table 6: Powerful groups related deviant acts

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Big corporations taking over Second Life for commercial purposes.	2.63
2. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes.	2.30
3. Powerful individuals or big corporations bidding the highest price and buying large lands.	2.21
4. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces.	2.05

Powerful groups related acts
(response categories' percentage means)

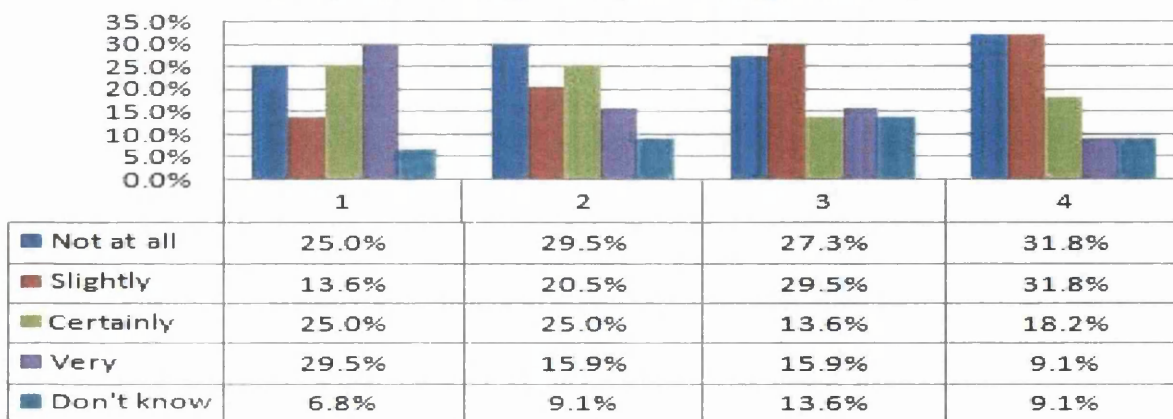


Figure 22: Powerful groups related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 6)

Table 7: SL community norms related acts

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership.	2.62
2. Not respecting the special theme of a sim when building in it.	2.52
3. Not obeying building regulations regarding the size of the building.	2.41
4. Not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims.	2.49
5. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life.	1.82
6. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world.	1.73
7. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised.	1.56
8. Joining a virtual gaming community to look for an intimate relationship.	1.41
9. Using a nude avatar in a PG area.	2.81
10. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area.	2.71

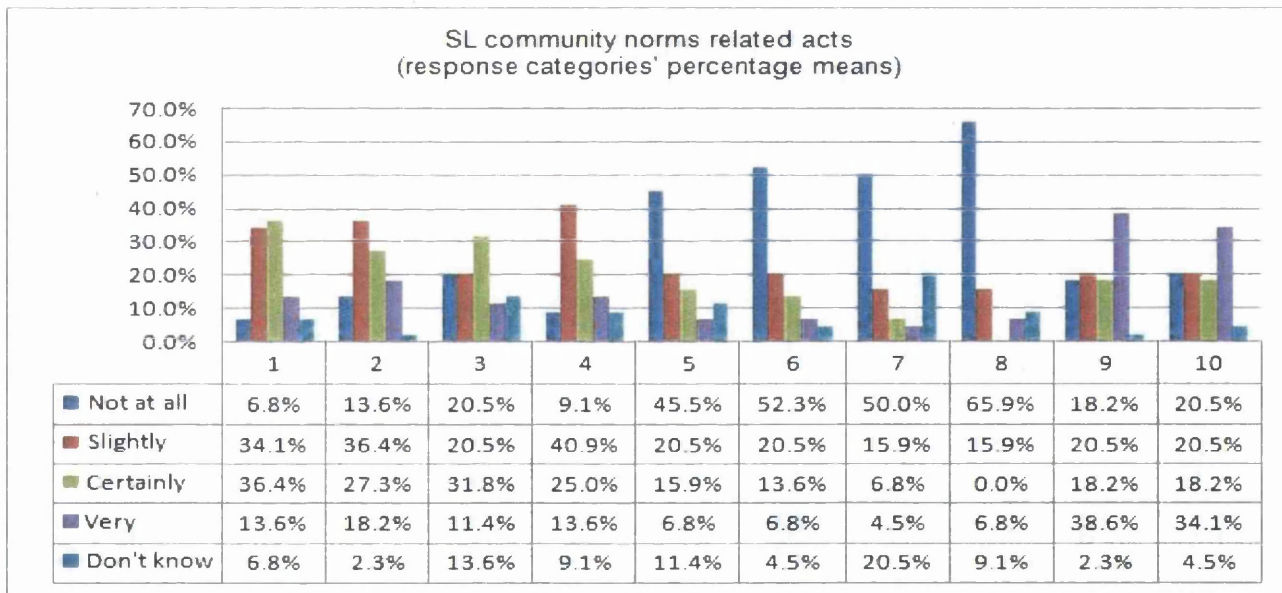


Figure 23: SL community norms related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 7)

Table 8: Avatar's identity & privacy related acts

Deviant Acts	Mean Scores, N = 44
1. Getting access to private IM conversations of other avatars.	3.29
2. Revealing the real life identity of another avatar.	3.18
3. Posting chat logs without any consent of the avatars involved.	3.08
4. An adult using a child-like avatar.	2.28
5. Impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity.	2.08
6. Having a very similar username as a Second Life celebrity.	1.76
7. Having a very similar username as another avatar.	1.83
8. A male using a female avatar.	1.72
9. Using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar.	1.67
10. Using a nude avatar.	1.61
11. A female using a male avatar.	1.64
12. Impersonating another individual by having the same avatar as the individual.	1.50
13. Using a non-human avatar.	1.56
14. Carrying weapons in Second Life.	1.50

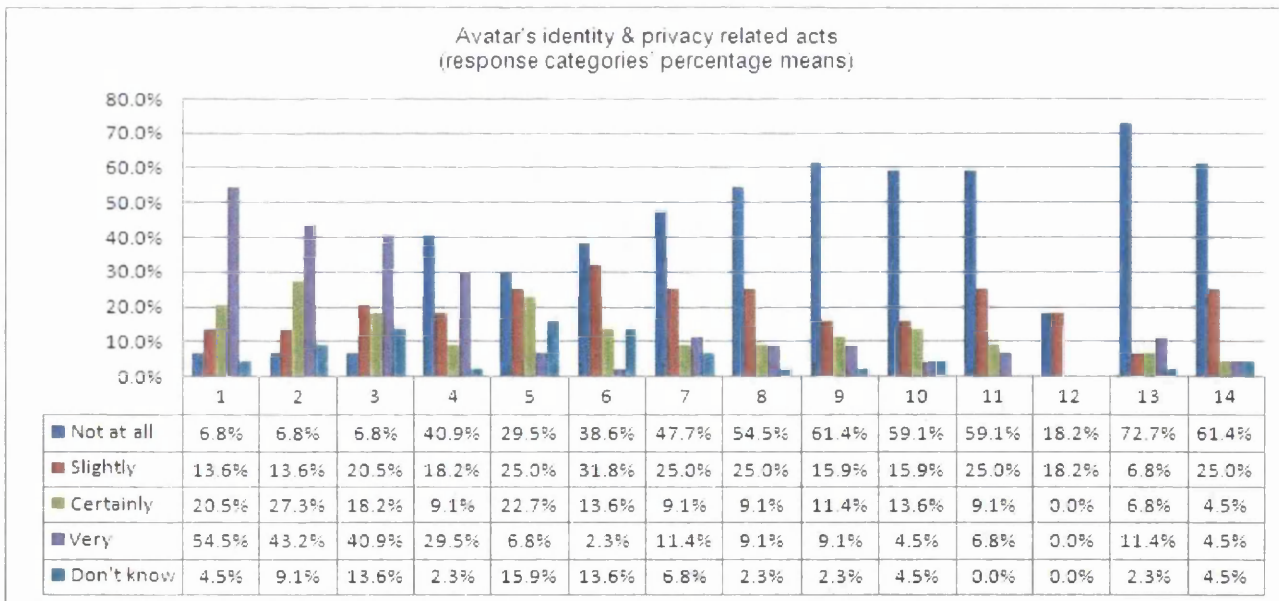


Figure 24: Avatar's self-identity & privacy related acts (response categories' percentage means) (The numbering in this figure corresponds to the numbering of the acts in table 8)

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	E45 & E46	39	.921	.000
Pair 2	E45 & E47	33	.268	.132
Pair 3	E46 & E47	33	.242	.175

E45: belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world.

E46: belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life.

E47: belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised.

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	E45 - E46	-.051	.394	.063	-.179	.076	-.813	38	.421
Pair 2	E45 - E47	.121	1.111	.193	-.273	.515	.627	32	.535
Pair 3	E46 - E47	.152	1.149	.200	-.256	.559	.758	32	.454

Figure 25: Paired samples correlations & paired samples test: E45, E46 & E47

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	E63 & E64	38	.637	.000

E63: not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims.

E64: not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership.

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	E63 - E64	-.184	.730	.118	-.424	.056	-1.556	37	.128

Figure 26: Paired samples correlations & paired samples test: E63 & E64

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E56 - E57	-1.220	1.129	.176	-1.576	-.863	-6.914	40	.000
Pair 2	E54 - E55	-1.410	1.251	.200	-1.816	-1.005	-7.042	38	.000
Pair 3	E52 - E53	-.897	.995	.159	-1.220	-.575	-5.635	38	.000
Pair 4	E43 - E44	-.881	1.064	.164	-1.212	-.549	-5.366	41	.000
Pair 5	E50 - E51	-.525	.816	.129	-.786	-.264	-4.069	39	.000

E57: using a nude avatar in a PG area.

E56: using a nude avatar.

E55: engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area.

E54: engaging in sexual activity with another avatar.

E53: shooting another avatar in a Safe Area.

E52: shooting another avatar.

E44: carrying weapon in a Safe Area.

E43: carrying weapon in Second Life.

E51: pushing another avatar in a Safe Area.

E50: pushing another avatar.

Figure 27: Paired samples test: E57 & E56; E55 & E54; E52 & E53; E44 & E43; E51 & E50

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E58 - E59	-1.897	1.209	.194	-2.290	-1.505	-9.797	38	.000

E58: exchanging pornographic material.

E59: exchanging child related pornographic material.

Figure 28: Paired samples test: E58 & E59

Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 E26 & E86	35	.674	.000
Pair 2 E26 & E85	36	.581	.000

E26: an adult using child-like avatar in a sexual act.
 E85: using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal.
 E86: an adult using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes.

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E26 - E86	-.257	.886	.150	-.561	.047	-1.717	34	.095
Pair 2	E26 - E85	.167	1.000	.167	-.172	.505	1.000	35	.324

Figure 29: Paired samples correlations & paired samples test: E26 & E85; E26 & E86

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E27 - E12	.475	1.219	.193	.085	.865	2.464	39	.018
Pair 2	E28 - E12	.475	1.240	.196	.078	.872	2.423	39	.020
Pair 3	E30 - E12	.632	1.172	.190	.246	1.017	3.321	37	.002

E27: not respecting another avatar's race or ethnicity.
 E28: not respecting another avatar's gender.
 E30: not respecting another avatar's sexual orientation.
 E12: to actually strike another avatar.

Figure 30: Paired samples test: E27 & E12; E28 & E12; E30 & E12

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E48 - E49	-1.854	1.424	.222	-2.303	-1.404	-8.335	40	.000

E48: carrying out fraudulent deals.
 E49: gambling.

Figure 31: Paired samples test: E48 & E49

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E90 - E89	.250	.588	.093	.062	.438	2.687	39	.011

E89: an individual or group that monopolises large spaces.

E90: an individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes.

Figure 32: Paired samples test: E89 & E90

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E35 - E71	.400	.810	.128	.141	.659	3.122	39	.003
Pair 2	E16 - E65	.946	1.224	.201	.538	1.354	4.703	38	.000
Pair 3	E37 - E69	.529	1.022	.175	.173	.886	3.020	33	.005
Pair 4	E37 - E42	.400	.810	.128	.141	.659	3.122	39	.003
Pair 5	E42 - E69	.088	.900	.154	-.226	.402	.572	33	.571
Pair 6	E36 - E40	.359	.811	.130	.095	.622	2.765	38	.009
Pair 7	E33 - E34	-.050	.749	.118	-.290	.190	-.422	39	.675

E35: sending harassing IM to another avatar.

E71: writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards.

E16: sending offensive images to another avatar's 'Give item' box.

E65: displaying offensive animations in Second Life.

E37: dropping bulky information in another avatar's 'Give item' box.

E69: writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards.

E42: sending bulky IM to another avatar.

E36: dropping unsolicited information in another avatar's 'Give item' box.

E40: sending unsolicited IM to another avatar.

E33: writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards.

E34: sending IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words to another avatar.

Figure 33: Paired samples test: E35 & E71; E16 & E65; E37 & E69; E37 & E42; E69 & E42; E36 & E40; E34 & E33

Experience and performance of deviance

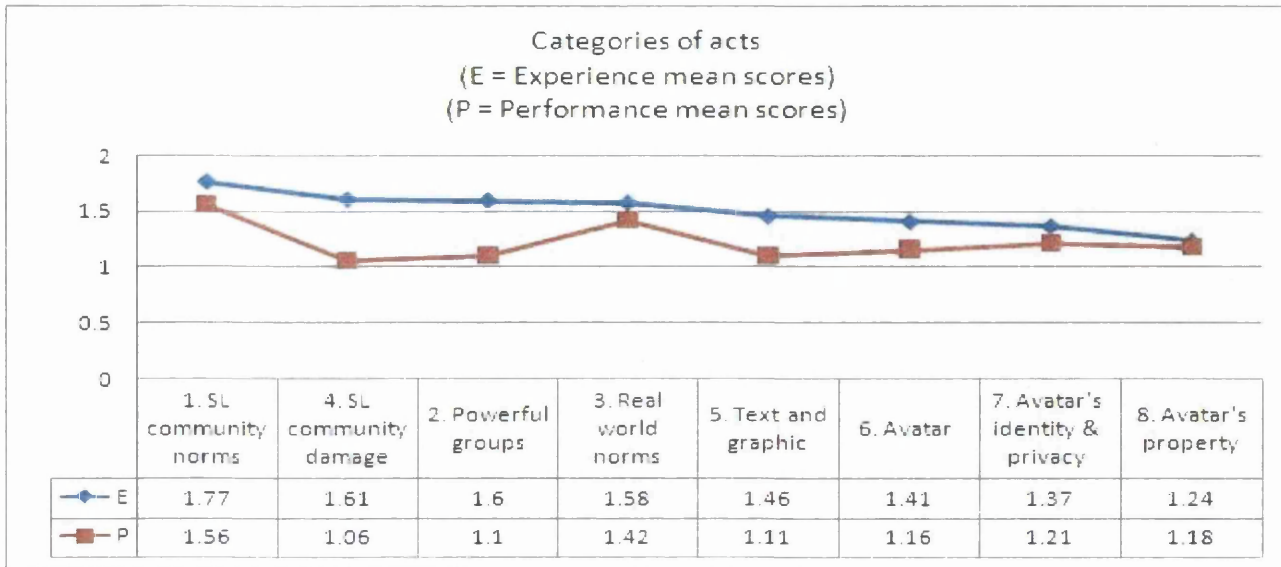


Figure 34: Categories of acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

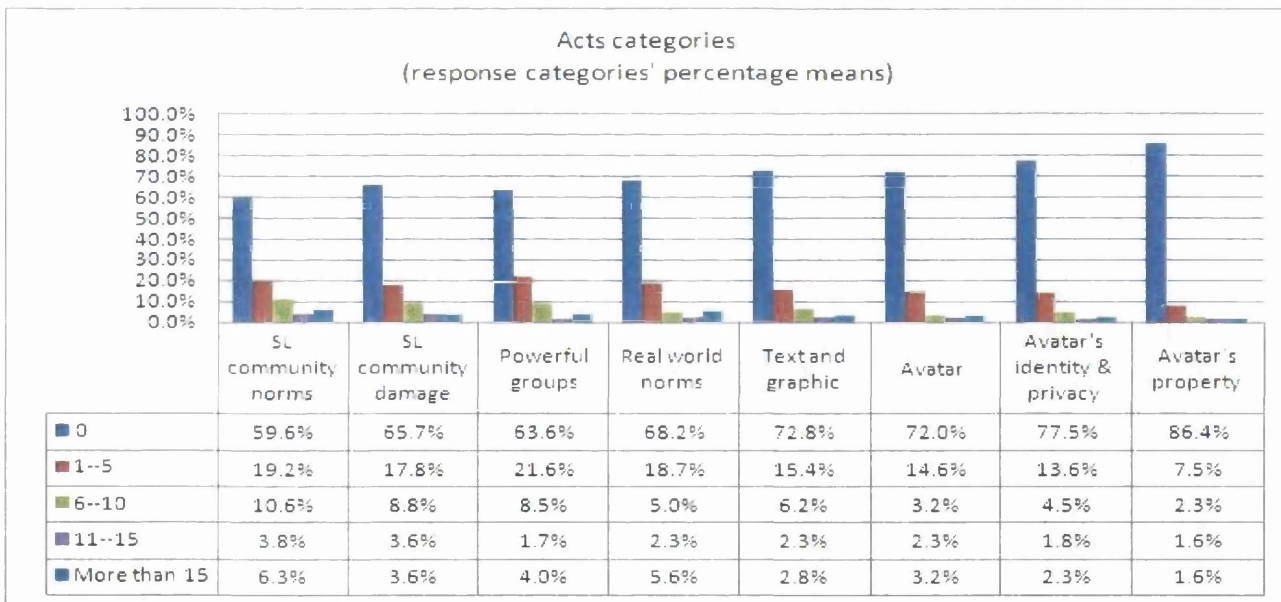


Figure 35: Experience: acts categories (response categories' percentage means)

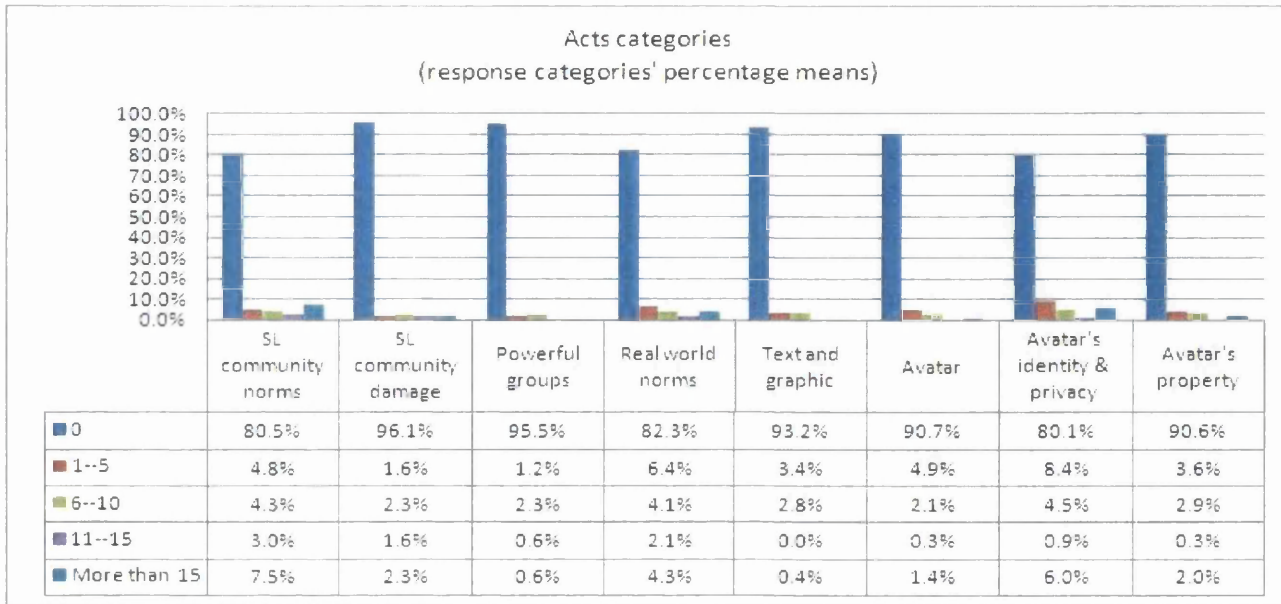


Figure 36: Performance: acts categories (response categories' percentage means)

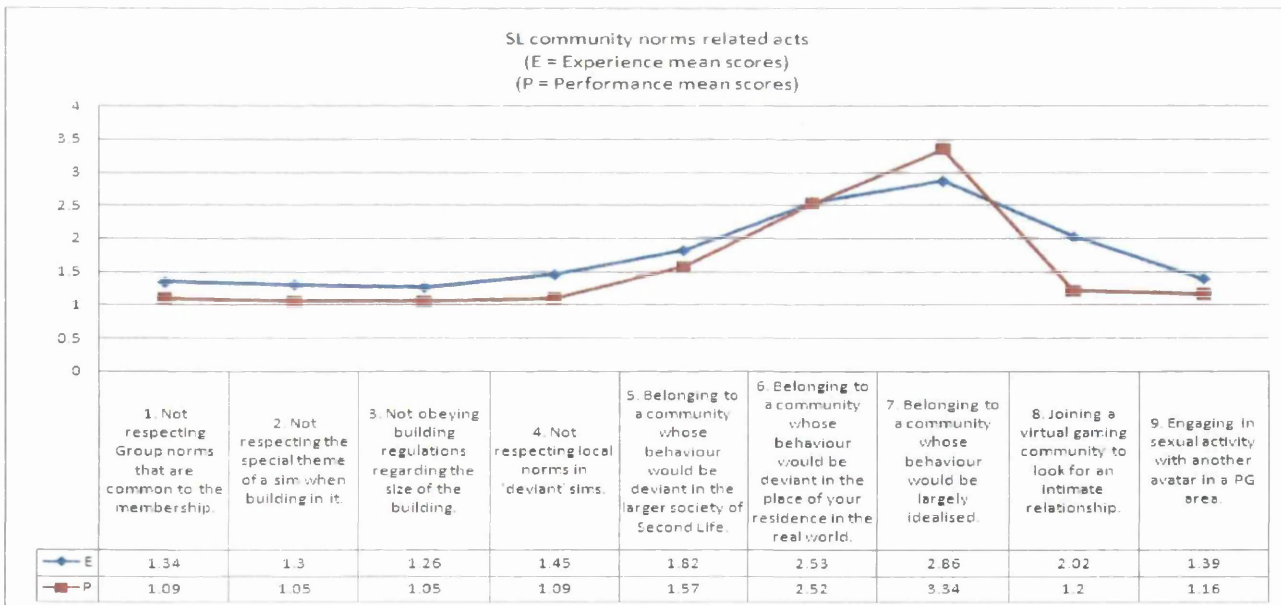


Figure 37: SL community norms related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

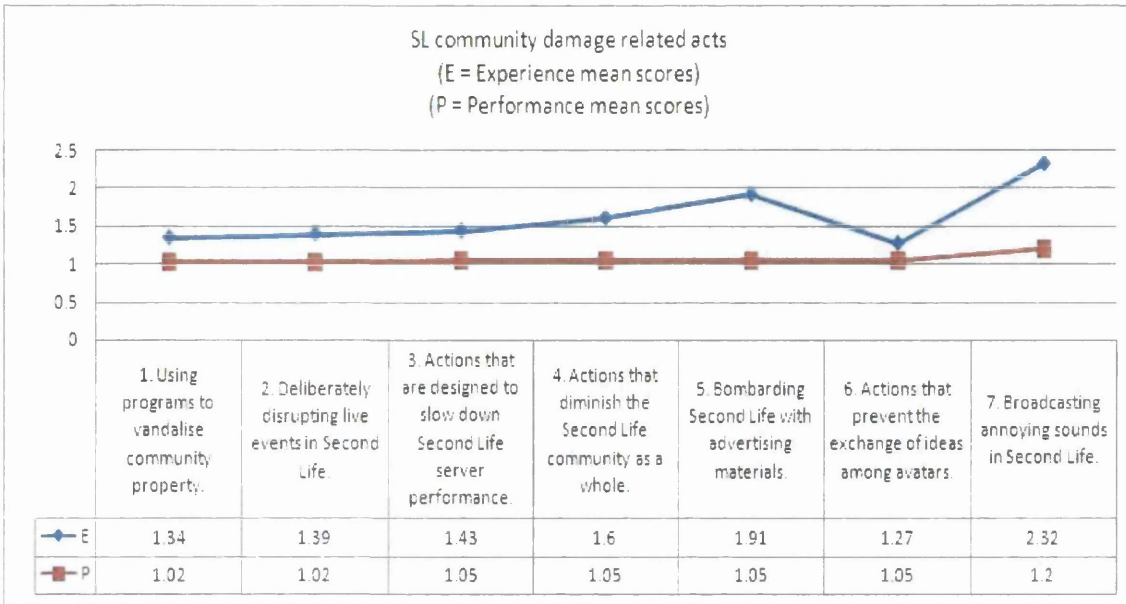


Figure 38: SL community damage related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

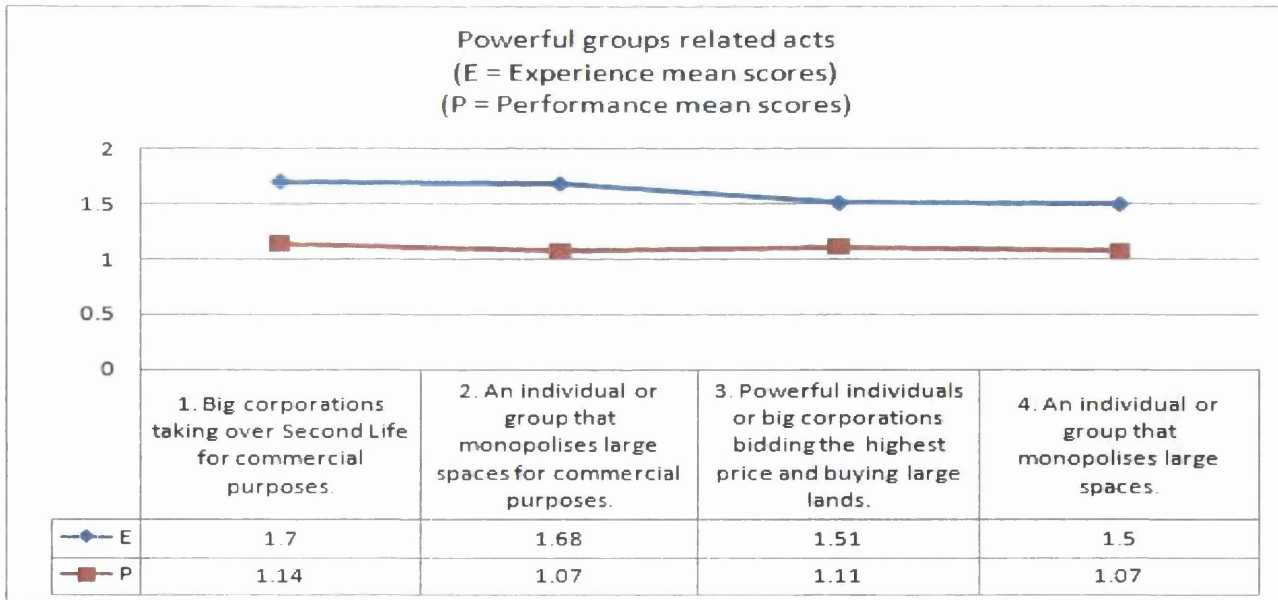


Figure 39: Powerful groups related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

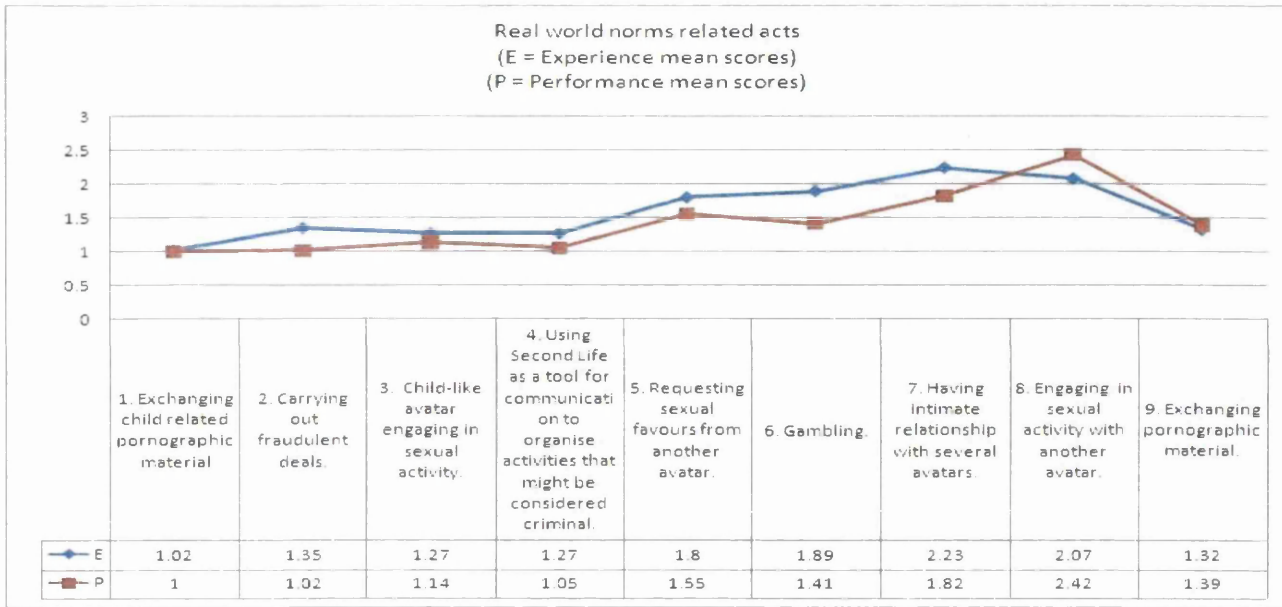


Figure 40: Real world norms related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

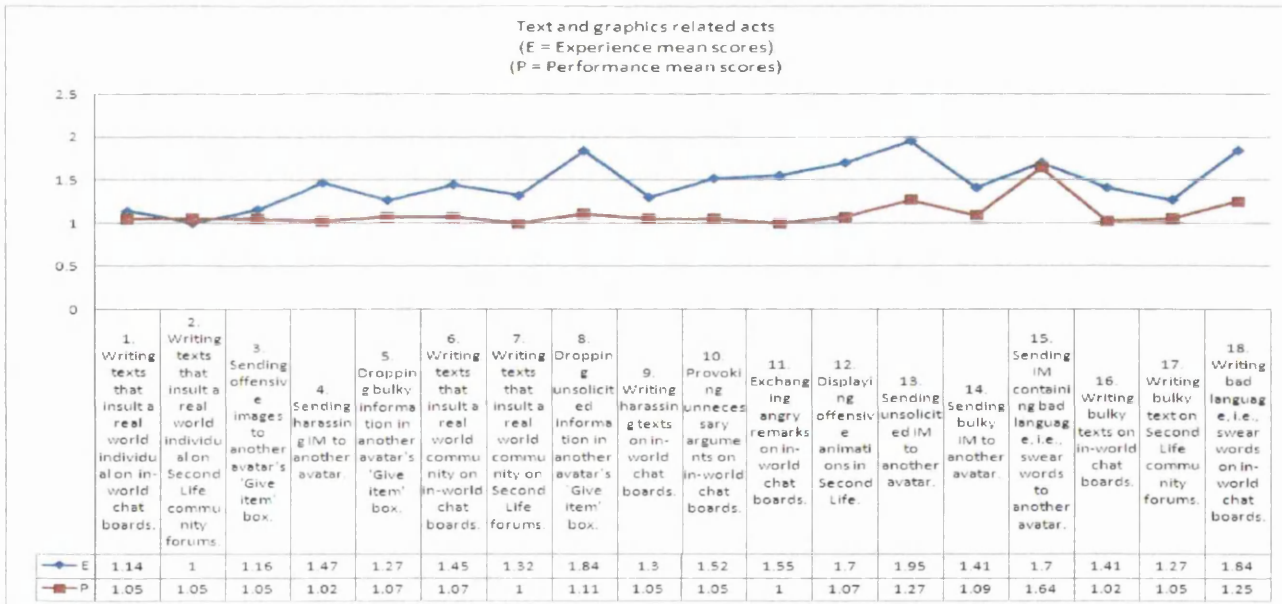


Figure 41: Text & graphic related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

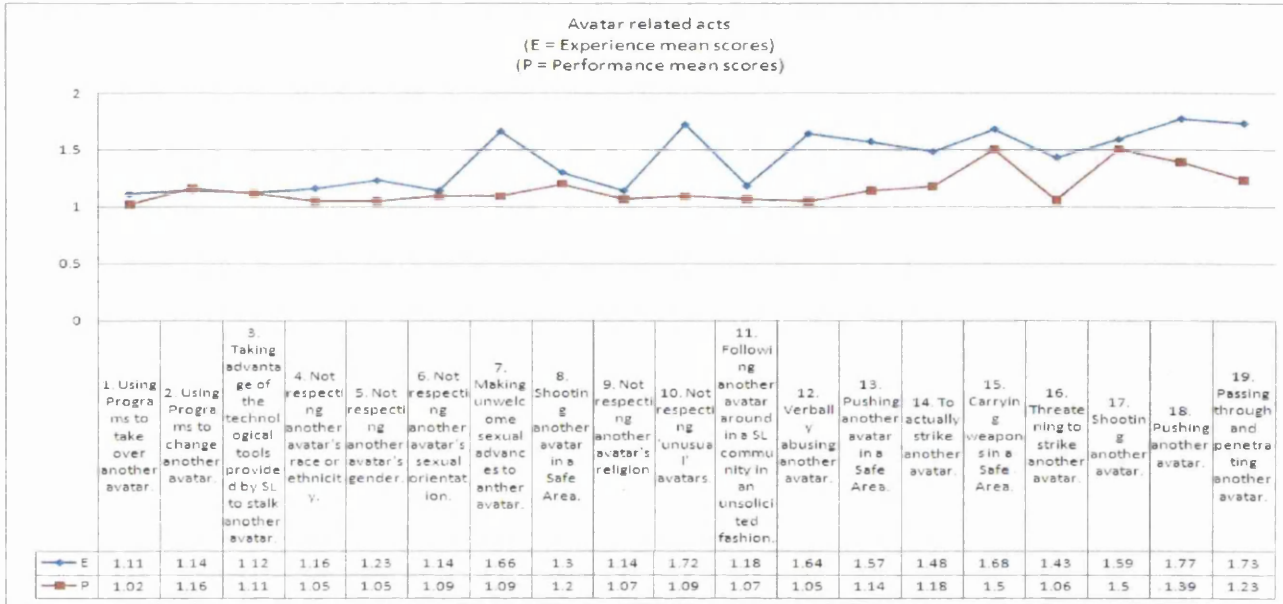


Figure 42: Avatar related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

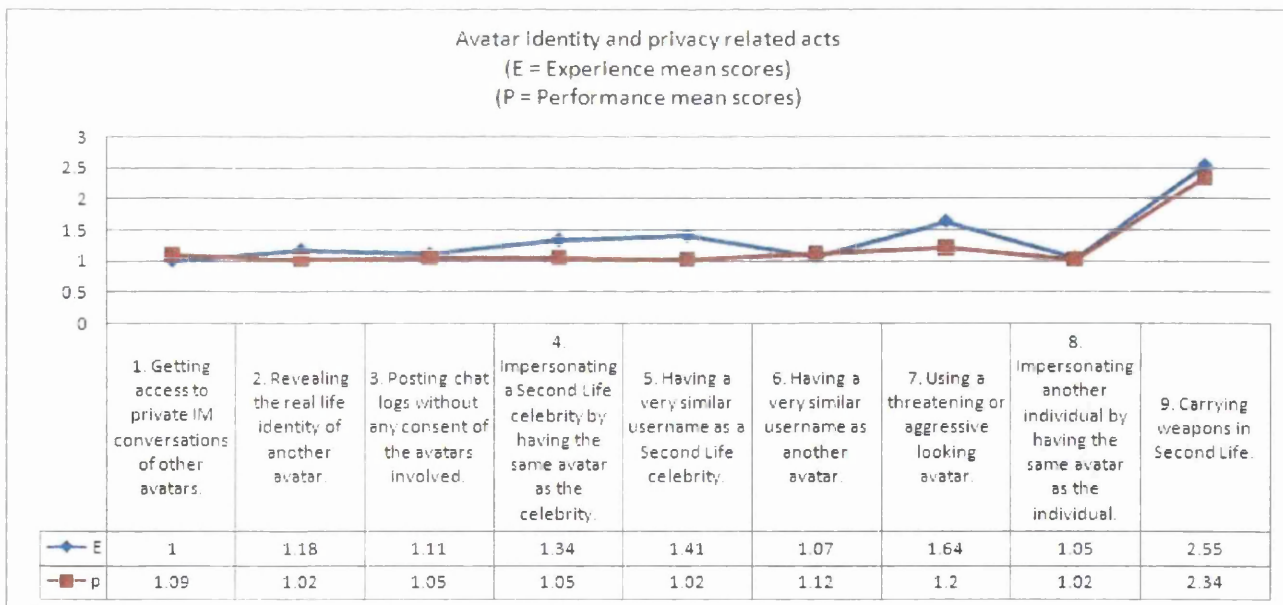


Figure 43: Avatar's identity & privacy related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

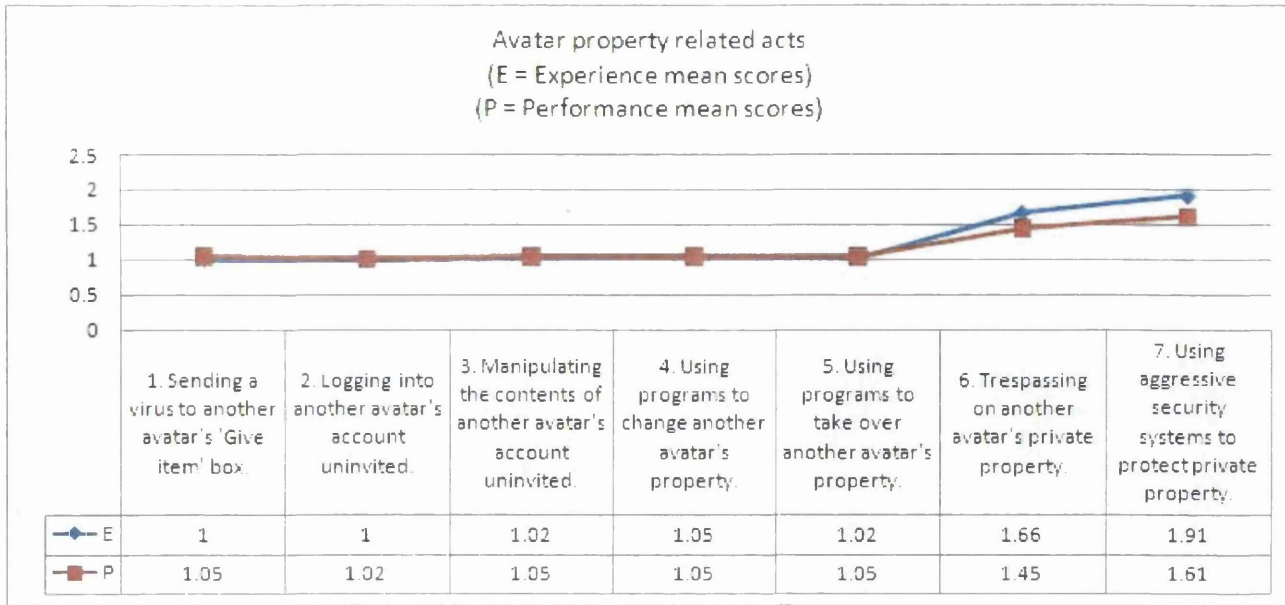


Figure 44: Avatar's property related acts: experience vs. performance (N = 44)

Demographic information

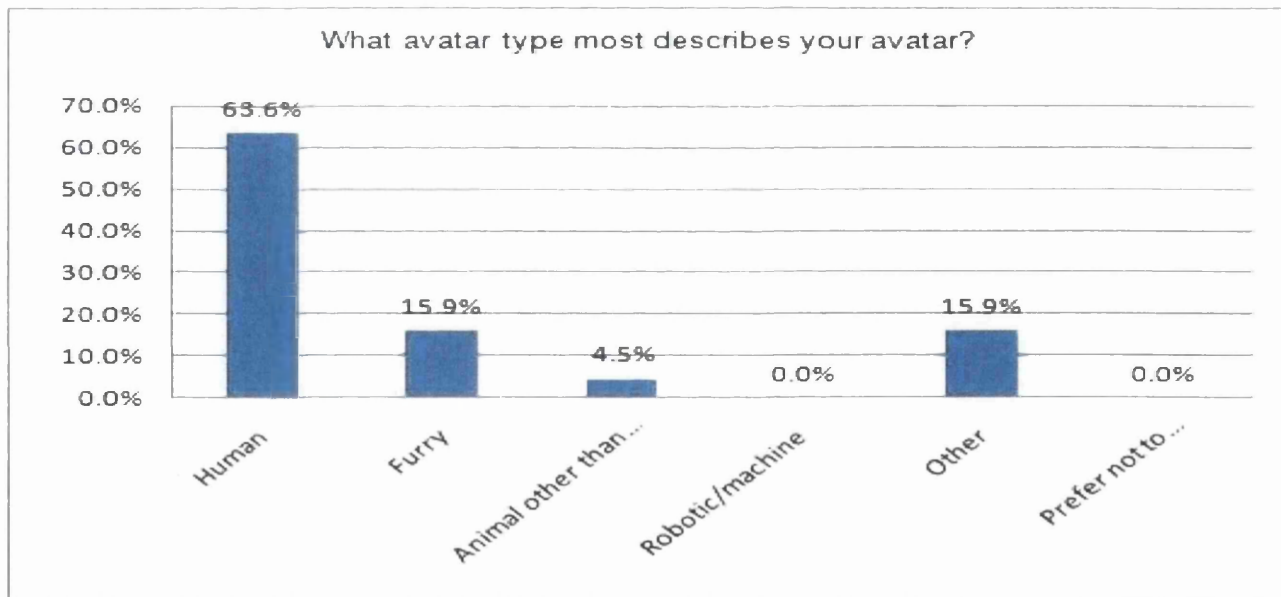


Figure 45: Questionnaire 1: What avatar type most describes your avatar? (N = 44)

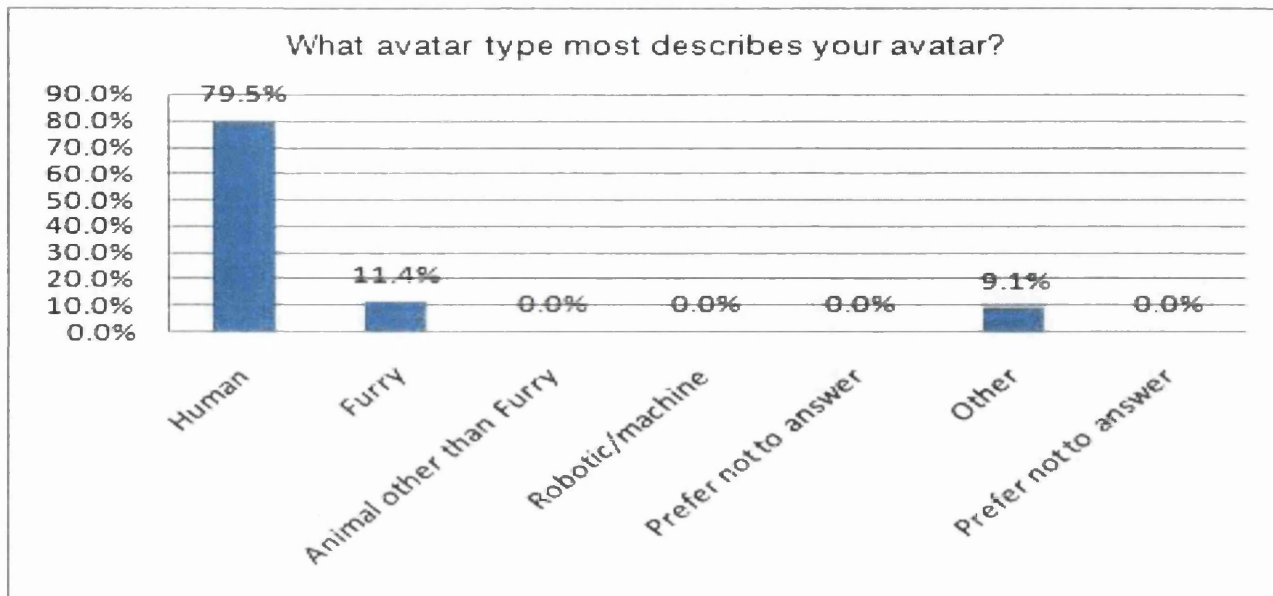


Figure 46: Questionnaire 2: What avatar type most describes your avatar? (N = 44)

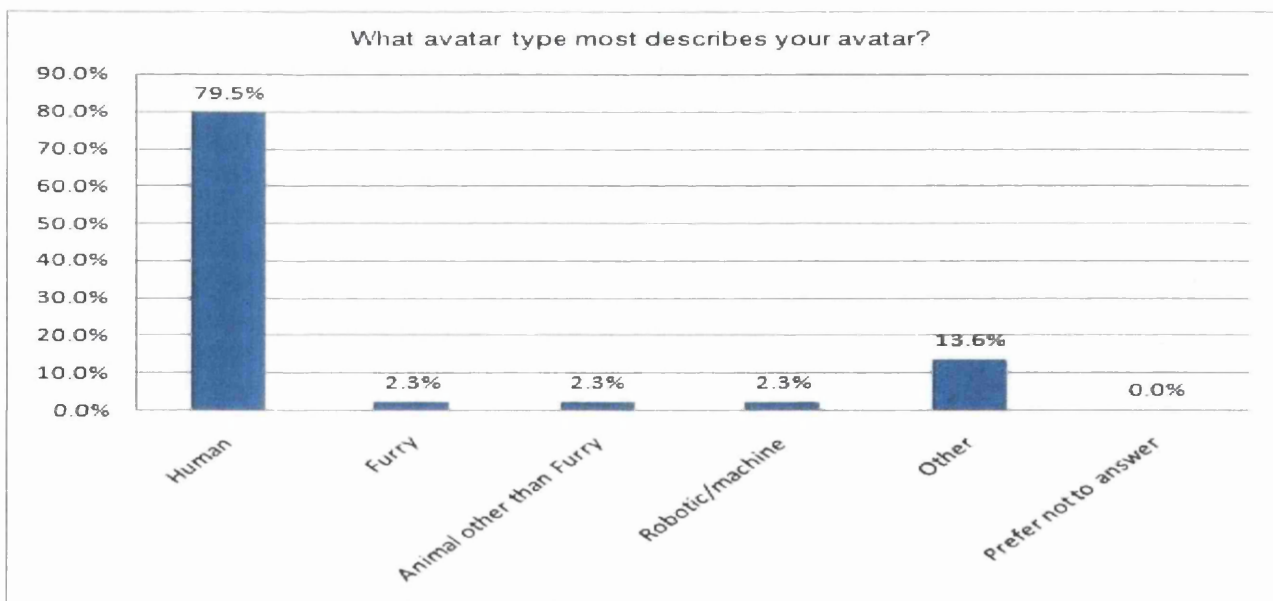


Figure 47: Questionnaire 3: What avatar type most describes your avatar? (N = 44)

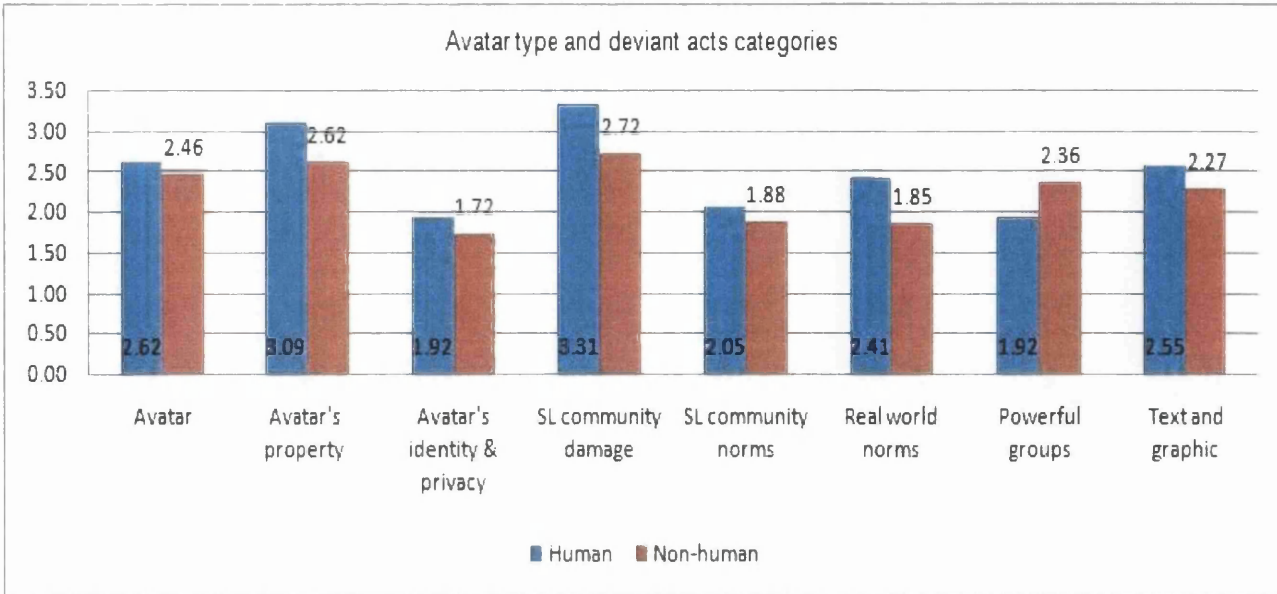


Figure 48: Questionnaire 1: Avatar type and acts categories

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Avatar	Equal variances assumed	.075	.786	.638	42	.527	.15993	24021	-.34401	.66186
	Equal variances not assumed			.638	31.155	.529	.15993	24074	-.35031	.66817
AvatarProperty	Equal variances assumed	3.123	.084	1.618	42	.113	.47698	29473	-.11783	1.07176
	Equal variances not assumed			1.524	26.172	.139	.47698	31280	-.16600	1.11993
AvatarIdentityPrivacy	Equal variances assumed	1.461	.233	1.418	42	.163	.20038	.14127	-.08473	.48544
	Equal variances not assumed			1.557	39.910	.127	.20038	.12871	-.05978	.46051
SLCommunityDamage	Equal variances assumed	3.894	.055	1.835	42	.074	.59198	32262	-.05910	1.24303
	Equal variances not assumed			1.725	26.005	.098	.59198	34323	-.11355	1.28748
SLCommunityNorms	Equal variances assumed	1.477	.231	.758	42	.452	.17232	22720	-.28818	.63082
	Equal variances not assumed			.832	39.853	.410	.17232	20717	-.24843	.59107
RealWorldNorms	Equal variances assumed	.001	.981	2.675	42	.011	.55259	20660	.13585	.96953
	Equal variances not assumed			2.827	36.889	.008	.55259	.19548	.15835	.94880
PowerfulGroups	Equal variances assumed	.170	.682	-1.356	42	.182	-.43973	32440	-1.09440	.21494
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.293	27.186	.207	-.43973	34012	-1.13741	.25704
TextandGraphic	Equal variances assumed	.222	.640	1.126	42	.267	.30304	26917	-.24016	.84625
	Equal variances not assumed			1.179	35.837	.248	.30304	25698	-.21823	.82430

Figure 49: Questionnaire 1: Independent samples test: type

Appendix 10: The List of 16 Questions

1. Some people suggest that Second Life encourages deviant activities. Do you feel your behaviour is less inhibited in Second Life than the physical world?
2. Some people suggest that Second Life is a place where we test old and new moralities and even the possibility of a world in which morals do not exist. Do you intentionally do things in Second Life that you know are clearly deviant in the physical world?
3. Some people suggest that Second Life mirrors the physical world. Is your experience of Second Life remote from, or close to, the physical world in which you reside?
4. Some people suggest that avatars are merely necessary tools to perform activities in Second Life. How does your avatar relate to the person you are in the physical world?
5. There is 3D avatar creation technology in Second Life, do you want an avatar that closely resembles you, or realises some new desired image?
6. How does the character of your avatar relate to your perception, experience and performance of activities in Second Life: if applicable, especially the deviant ones?
7. In the communities of Second Life, there are various norms and rules, how do they shape your views about deviant activities?
8. Do you think you are free to do whatever you want in Second Life?
9. Who has the power to define deviance, or get away with deviant activities, in Second Life?
10. What sort of power, if any, do you enjoy, or dislike, in Second Life?

11. Could you please list a few activities that are deviant where you live in the physical world but are not deviant in Second Life?
12. Could you think of some activities in Second Life which you thought were deviant when you first entered the cybercommunity but think otherwise now?
13. Could you think of some activities in Second Life which you thought were Not deviant when you first entered the cybercommunity but think otherwise now?
14. Some people suggest that as you spend more time in Second Life, your avatars change from a tool, to a 'self' that gathers its own identity and eventually, there might be circumstances that a 'self' could become the 'self'. Does such a continuum exist, if so, how does it influence your perception, experience and performance of activities especially, the deviant ones in Second Life?
15. People join Second Life for different reasons and have different perceptions of deviance in their communities. How do the reasons behind your participation in Second Life influence your perception of deviance in this cybercommunity?
16. Some people suggest that as you spend more time in Second Life, your perception of the cybercommunity changes from a tool, to a place and eventually, to a 'way of being'. Do you think such a continuum exists, if so, how does it affect your perception, experience and performance of deviant activities in this cybercommunity?

Appendix 11: Questionnaire 1 Web Version

Swansea University
School of Human Sciences

Opinion Survey of Residents on the Nature of Deviance in Second Life

In the real world, the criminal law differentiates criminal behaviours from non-criminal ones. In Second Life, the term 'crime' can no longer be used since most of activities that we are interested in, have uncertain criminal status.

This survey asks for your opinions concerning deviant behaviour in Second Life. At this moment, we know little about types of deviant behaviour in cybercommunities and we need your help to improve our knowledge and understanding. We need to know what types of behaviour that YOU consider to be deviant in the particular cybercommunity of Second Life.

If you complete this survey, the answers you provide will be treated confidentially, you will remain anonymous. No individuals will be identified through this research.

Thank you very much for your help.

Start Survey

Swansea University
School of Human Sciences

1. When did you become a Second Life resident?

- | Year | Please click the year that applies to you |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. 2003 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. 2004 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. 2005 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. 2006 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. 2007 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. 2008 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Prefer not to answer | <input type="radio"/> |

Continue

2. How many hours per week on average do you spend in Second Life?

Number of hours Please click the one that applies to you

- 1. 5 or less
- 2. 6-10
- 3. 11-20
- 4. 21-30
- 5. 31-40
- 6. 41+
- 7. Prefer not to answer

Continue

3. What avatar type most describes your avatar?

Avatar type

Please click the type that most describes your avatar

- 1. Human
- 2. Furry
- 3. Animal other than Furry but including birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, etc.
- 4. Robotic/machine
- 5. Prefer not to answer
- 6. Other (please describe in the text box)

Continue

4. What avatar gender most describes your avatar?

- | Avatar gender | Please click the gender that most describes your avatar |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Male | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Female | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. No gender | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Mixed-gender | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Prefer not to answer | <input type="radio"/> |
-

5. What avatar character/style most describes your avatar?

- | Avatar character/style | Please click the character/style that most describes your avatar |
|---|--|
| 1. Mythical | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Cybergoth | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Exotic improvised Japanese fashion | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Warrior | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Science fiction | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Boy/girl next door | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Cartoon/comic | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Heroic | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Domination | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Military | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. School boy/girl | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. 'Anti-hero' | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. 'Gang member' | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. 'Secret agent' | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. Prefer not to answer | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Other (please describe in the text box) | <input type="radio"/> |
-

6. What avatar age most describes your avatar?

- | Avatar 'age' | Please click the age group that most describes your avatar |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. -10 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. 11-20 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. 21-30 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. 31-40 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. 41-50 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. 51-60 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. 61-70 | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. 71+ | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. 'Ageless' | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Prefer not to answer | <input type="radio"/> |

Continue

7. What avatar origin most describes your avatar?

- | Avatar origin | Please click the origin that most describes your avatar |
|---|---|
| 1. Default avatar | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Default avatar modified by features from Second Life library | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Created by you | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Purchased by you | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Freebie | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Other (please describe in the text box) | <input type="radio"/> |

Continue

8. When you are spending time in Second Life, how much are you motivated by the following?

Motivation	1 = Not at all; 2 = Not very much; 3 = A bit; 4 = Quite a lot; 5 = Very much				
1. I can be in a different place.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
2. I can have many choices of things to do.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
3. I can have instant access to any of my choices of things to do.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
4. I can be in a place that is free from the physical constraints of the real world.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
5. I can escape from the structures that govern life in the real world.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
6. I am free to do whatever I want.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
7. I can have no responsibilities.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
8. I can do lots of things without worrying about the consequences.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
9. I can create a life which I have more control of.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
10. I can escape from imperfections in the real world.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

Continue

Motivation	1 = Not at all; 2 = Not very much; 3 = A bit; 4 = Quite a lot; 5 = Very much				
11. I can enjoy general social interactions.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
12. I can enjoy social interactions that are different from those of the real world.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
13. I can enjoy romantic encounters.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
14. I can meet and be friends with like-minded people.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
15. I can have relationships that are not based on real world materialistic standards.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
16. I can be someone else.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
17. I can be known as whom I truly am.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
18. I can create a different image of myself.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
19. I can live a different life as another person.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
20. I can be anonymous.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

Continue

Motivation

1 = Not at all; 2 = Not very much; 3 = A bit; 4 = Quite a lot; 5 = Very much

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 21. I can build my dream home. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 22. I can help to build a community. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 23. I can belong to a community. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 24. I can enjoy 'risky' activities. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 25. I can enjoy exciting leisure activities. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 26. I can modify Second Life open source. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 27. I can catch up with some new technologies. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 28. I can enjoy vacations. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 29. I can open my own business. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 30. I can do casual work for money. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

[Continue](#)

Motivation

1 = Not at all; 2 = Not very much; 3 = A bit; 4 = Quite a lot; 5 = Very much

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 31. I can make money with very little investment. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 32. I can have a new platform to promote my real world business. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 33. I can go to pubs and clubs. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 34. I can go to dance halls. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 35. I can go shopping. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 36. I can collect freebies. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 37. I can have things I want, yet can't afford in the real world. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 38. I can pass my time without spending money. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 39. I can have a hobby shared with my friends. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

[Continue](#)

9. To what extent do you think the following behaviours are deviant in Second Life?

Behaviour	1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know				
1. A male using a female avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
2. A female using a male avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
3. Using a non-human avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
4. An adult using a child-like avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
5. Not respecting 'unusual' avatars.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
6. Passing through and penetrating another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
7. Not respecting avatars appearing to be national stereotypes.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
8. Revealing the real life identity of another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
9. Using programs to take over another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
10. Using programs to change another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

Continue

Behaviour	1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know				
11. Threatening to strike another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
12. To actually strike another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
13. Using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
14. Logging into another avatar's account uninvited.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
15. Manipulating the contents of another avatar's account uninvited.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
16. Sending offensive images to another avatar's 'Give item' box.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
17. Posting chat logs without any consent of the avatars involved.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
18. Requesting sexual favours from another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
19. Making unwelcome sexual advances to another avatar.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5
20. Trespassing on another avatar's private property.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 21. Using programs to take over another avatar's property. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 22. Using programs to change another avatar's property. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 23. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 24. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on Second Life community forums. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 25. Having a very similar username as another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 26. An adult using a child-like avatar in a sexual action. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 27. Not respecting another avatar's race or ethnicity. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 28. Not respecting another avatar's gender. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 29. Not respecting another avatar's religion. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 30. Not respecting another avatar's sexual orientation. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 31. Sending a virus to another avatar's 'Give item' box. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 32. Taking advantage of the technological tools provided by Second Life to stalk another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 33. Writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 34. Sending IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words to another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 35. Sending harassing IM to another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 36. Dropping unsolicited information in another avatar's 'Give item' box. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 37. Dropping bulky information in another avatar's 'Give item' box. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 38. Getting access to private IM conversations of other avatars. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 39. Impersonating another individual by having the same avatar as the individual. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 40. Sending unsolicited IM to another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 41. Following another avatar around in a Second Life community in an unsolicited fashion. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 42. Sending bulky IM to another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 43. Carrying weapons in Second Life. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 44. Carrying weapons in a Safe Area. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 45. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the place of your residence in the real world. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 46. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 47. Belonging to a community whose behaviour would be largely idealised. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 48. Gambling. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 49. Carrying out fraudulent deals. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 50. Pushing another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 51. Pushing another avatar in a Safe Area. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 52. Shooting another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 53. Shooting another avatar in a Safe Area. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 54. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 55. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 56. Using a nude avatar. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 57. Using a nude avatar in a PG area. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 58. Exchanging pornographic material. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 59. Exchanging child related pornographic material. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 60. Not obeying building regulations regarding the size of the building. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 61. Using aggressive security systems to protect private property. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 62. Not respecting the special theme of a sim when building in it. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 63. Not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 64. Not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 65. Displaying offensive animations in Second Life. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 66. Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 67. Broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 68. Writing bulky texts on Second Life community forums. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 69. Writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 70. Joining a virtual gaming community to look for an intimate relationship. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

[Continue](#)

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 71. Writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 72. Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 73. Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 74. Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 75. Using programs to vandalise community property. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 76. Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 77. Exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 78. Provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 79. Writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 80. Writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 61. Using aggressive security systems to protect private property. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 62. Not respecting the special theme of a sim when building in it. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 63. Not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 64. Not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 65. Displaying offensive animations in Second Life. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 66. Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 67. Broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 68. Writing bulky texts on Second Life community forums. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 69. Writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| 70. Joining a virtual gaming community to look for an intimate relationship. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 | <input type="radio"/> 4 | <input type="radio"/> 5 |

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly; 4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

71. Writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards. 1 2 3 4 5
72. Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance. 1 2 3 4 5
73. Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars. 1 2 3 4 5
74. Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole. 1 2 3 4 5
75. Using programs to vandalise community property. 1 2 3 4 5
76. Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life. 1 2 3 4 5
77. Exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards. 1 2 3 4 5
78. Provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards. 1 2 3 4 5
79. Writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards. 1 2 3 4 5
80. Writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums. 1 2 3 4 5

Continue

Behaviour

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Certainly;
4 = Very; 5 = Don't know

81. Impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity. 1 2 3 4 5
82. Having a very similar username as a Second Life celebrity. 1 2 3 4 5
83. Having intimate relationship with several avatars. 1 2 3 4 5
84. A married individual marrying another avatar in Second Life. 1 2 3 4 5
85. Using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal. 1 2 3 4 5
86. An adult using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes. 1 2 3 4 5
87. Verbally abusing another avatar. 1 2 3 4 5
88. Big corporations taking over Second Life for commercial purposes. 1 2 3 4 5
89. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces. 1 2 3 4 5
90. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes. 1 2 3 4 5
91. Powerful individuals or big corporations bidding the highest price and buying large lands. 1 2 3 4 5

Submit and Finish

Appendix 12: Questionnaire 2

Questions

Residential Survey on the Experience of Deviance in Second Life

This survey asks about behaviours that you have experienced in Second Life. At this moment, we know little about individuals' experience of a range of behaviours in cybercommunities and we need your help to improve our knowledge and understanding. We need to know how frequently YOU have experienced different types of behaviour in the particular cybercommunity of Second Life.

If you complete this survey, the answers you provide will be treated confidentially, you will remain anonymous. No individuals will be identified through this research.

Thank you very much for your help.

1. When did you become a Second Life resident?

1. 2003
2. 2004
3. 2005
4. 2006
5. 2007
6. 2008
7. Prefer not to answer

2. How many hours per week on average do you spend in Second Life?

1. 5 or less
2. 6-10

3. 11-20

4. 21-30

5. 31-40

6. 41+

7. Prefer not to answer

3. What avatar type most describes your avatar?

1. Human

2. Furry

3. Animal other than Furry but including birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, etc.

4. Robotic/machine

5. Prefer not to answer

6. Other(please describe in the text box)

4. What avatar gender most describes your avatar?

1. Male

2. Female

3. No gender

4. Mixed-gender

5. Prefer not to answer

5. What avatar character/style most describes your avatar?

1. Mythical

2. Cybergoth

3. Exotic improvised Japanese fashion

4. Warrior

5. Science fiction

6. Boy/girl next door
7. Cartoon/comic
8. Heroic
9. Domination
10. Military
11. School boy/girl
12. 'Anti-hero'
13. 'Gang member'
14. 'Secret agent'
15. Prefer not to answer
16. Other(please describe in the text box)

6. What avatar age most describes your avatar?

1. -10
2. 11-20
3. 21-30
4. 31-40
5. 41-50
6. 51-60
7. 61-70
8. 71+
9. 'Ageless'
10. Prefer not to answer

7. How many times have you experienced the following behaviours during your last ten visits in Second Life (preferably, each of those visits is longer than an hour)?

1 = 0; 2 = 1-5; 3 = 6-10; 4 = 11-15; 5 = more than 15

1. Another avatar not respecting your avatar.
2. Another avatar passing through and penetrating your avatar.
3. Your real life identity being revealed.
4. Another avatar using programs to take over your avatar.
5. Another avatar using programs to change your avatar.
6. Another avatar threatening to strike your avatar.
7. Another avatar actually striking your avatar.
8. A threatening or aggressive looking avatar appearing around your avatar.
9. Another avatar logging into your account uninvited.
10. Another avatar manipulating the contents of your account uninvited.
11. Another avatar sending offensive images to your 'Give item' box.
12. Another avatar posting your chat logs without your consent.
13. Another avatar requesting sexual favours from your.
14. Another avatar making unwelcome sexual advances to your.
15. Another avatar trespassing on your private property.
16. Another avatar using programs to take over your property.
17. Another avatar using programs to change your property.
18. Another avatar writing texts that insult your avatar on in-world chat boards.
19. Another avatar writing texts that insult your avatar on Second Life community forums.
20. Another avatar having a very similar username as you.
21. Another avatar not respecting your avatar's race or ethnicity.
22. Another avatar not respecting your avatar's gender.
23. Another avatar not respecting your avatar's religion.
24. Another avatar not respecting your avatar's sexual orientation.

25. Another avatar sending a virus to your 'Give item' box.
26. Another avatar taking advantage of the technological tools provided by Second Life to stalk your.
27. Another avatar writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards.
28. Another avatar sending you IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words.
29. Another avatar sending you harassing IM.
30. Another avatar sending unsolicited information to your 'Give item' box.
31. Another avatar sending bulky information to your 'Give item' box.
32. Another avatar accessing your private IM conversations.
33. Another avatar impersonating you by having the same avatar as you.
34. Another avatar sending you unsolicited IM.
35. Another avatar following you around in a Second Life community in an unsolicited fashion.
36. Another avatar sending you bulky IM.
37. Another avatar carrying weapons in Second Life.
38. Another avatar carrying weapons in a Safe Area.
39. Another avatar participating in a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of the real world.
40. Another avatar participating in a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life.
41. Another avatar participating in a community where good behaviour is expected.
42. Another avatar gambles in Second Life.
43. Another avatar carrying out fraudulent deals.
44. Being pushed by another avatar.
45. Being Pushed by another avatar in a Safe Area.
46. Being shot by another avatar.

47. Being shot by another avatar in a Safe Area.
48. Being asked to engage in sexual activity with another avatar.
49. Being asked to engage in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area.
50. Child-like avatar engaging in sexual activity.
51. Another avatar sending you pornographic material.
52. Another avatar sending you child related pornographic material.
53. Another avatar not obeying building regulations regarding the size of the building.
54. Another avatar using aggressive security systems to protect private property.
55. Another avatar not respecting towards the special theme of a sim when building in it.
56. Another avatar not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims.
57. Another avatar not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership.
58. Another avatar displaying offensive animations in Second Life.
59. Another avatar bombarding Second Life with advertising materials.
60. Another avatar broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life.
61. Another avatar writing bulky texts on Second Life community forums.
62. Another avatar writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards.
63. Another avatar looking for an intimate relationship in a virtual gaming community.
64. Another avatar writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards.
65. Another avatar carrying out actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance.
66. Another avatar carrying out actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars.
67. Another avatar carrying out actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole.
68. Another avatar using programs to vandalise community property.

69. Another avatar deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life.
70. Other avatars exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards.
71. Another avatar provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards.
72. Another avatar writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards.
73. Another avatar writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums.
74. Another avatar impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity.
75. Another avatar having a very similar username as a Second Life celebrity.
76. Another avatar having intimate relationship with several other avatars.
77. Another avatar using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal.
78. Being verbally abused by another avatar.
79. Big corporations taking over Second Life for commercial purposes.
80. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces.
81. An individual or group that monopolises large spaces for commercial purposes.
82. Powerful individuals or big corporations bidding the highest price and buying large lands.

Thank You Very Much!

Appendix 13: Questionnaire 3

Questions

Residential Self Report on Deviance in Second Life

This survey asks about your behaviour in Second Life. At this moment, we know little about individuals' behaviour in cybercommunities and we need your help to improve our knowledge and understanding. We need to know how frequently YOU have carried out different types of behaviour in the particular cybercommunity of Second Life.

If you complete this survey, the answers you provide will be treated confidentially, you will remain anonymous. No individuals will be identified through this research.

Thank you very much for your help.

1. When did you become a Second Life resident?

1. 2003
2. 2004
3. 2005
4. 2006
5. 2007
6. 2008
7. Prefer not to answer

2. How many hours per week on average do you spend in Second Life?

1. 5 or less
2. 6-10

3. 11-20

4. 21-30

5. 31-40

6. 41+

7. Prefer not to answer

3. What avatar type most describes your avatar?

1. Human

2. Furry

3. Animal other than Furry but including birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, etc.

4. Robotic/machine

5. Prefer not to answer

6. Other (please describe in the text box)

4. What avatar gender most describes your avatar?

1. Male

2. Female

3. No gender

4. Mixed-gender

5. Prefer not to answer

5. What avatar character/style most describes your avatar?

1. Mythical

2. Cybergoth

3. Exotic improvised Japanese fashion

4. Warrior

5. Science fiction

6. Boy/girl next door
7. Cartoon/comic
8. Heroic
9. Domination
10. Military
11. School boy/girl
12. 'Anti-hero'
13. 'Gang member'
14. 'Secret agent'
15. Prefer not to answer
16. Other(please describe in the text box)

6. What avatar age most describes your avatar?

1. -10
2. 11-20
3. 21-30
4. 31-40
5. 41-50
6. 51-60
7. 61-70
8. 71+
9. 'Ageless'
10. Prefer not to answer

7. How many times have you carried out the following behaviours during your last ten visits in Second Life (preferably, each of those visits is longer than an hour)?

1 = 0; 2 = 1-5; 3 = 6-10; 4 = 11-15; 5 = more than 15

1. Using an avatar of a different gender.
2. Having a very similar username as a Second Life celebrity.
3. Using a child-like avatar.
4. Not respecting 'unusual' avatars.
5. Verbally abusing another avatar.
6. Passing through and penetrating another avatar.
7. Not respecting avatars appearing to be national stereotypes.
8. Revealing the real life identity of another avatar.
9. Using programs to take over another avatar.
10. Using programs to change another avatar.
11. Threatening to strike another avatar.
12. To actually strike another avatar.
13. Using a threatening or aggressive looking avatar.
14. Logging into another avatar's account uninvited.
15. Manipulating the contents of another avatar's account uninvited.
16. Sending offensive images to another avatar's 'Give item' box.
17. Posting chat logs without any consent of the avatars involved.
18. Requesting sexual favours from another avatar.
19. Making unwelcome sexual advances to another avatar.
20. Trespassing on another avatar's private property.
21. Using programs to take over another avatar's property.
22. Using programs to change another avatar's property.
23. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on in-world chat boards.
24. Writing texts that insult a real world individual on Second Life community forums.
25. Having a very similar username as another avatar.

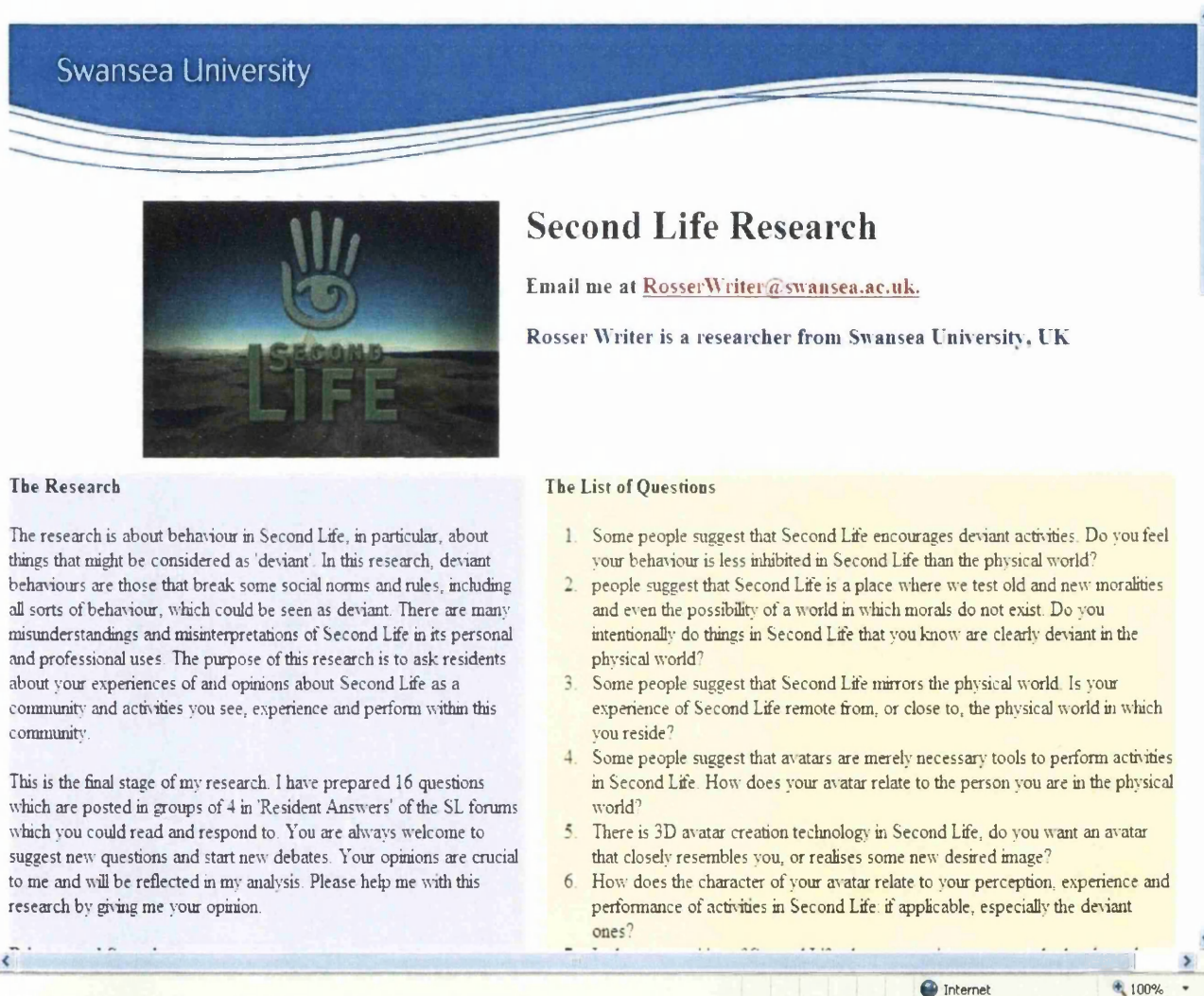
26. Using a child-like avatar in a sexual action.
27. Not respecting another avatar's race or ethnicity.
28. Not respecting another avatar's gender.
29. Not respecting another avatar's religion.
30. Not respecting another avatar's sexual orientation.
31. Sending a virus to another avatar's 'Give item' box.
32. Taking advantage of the technological tools provided by Second Life to stalk another avatar.
33. Writing bad language, i.e., swear words on in-world chat boards.
34. Sending IM containing bad language, i.e., swear words to another avatar.
35. Sending harassing IM to another avatar.
36. Dropping unsolicited information in another avatar's 'Give item' box.
37. Dropping bulky information in another avatar's 'Give item' box.
38. Getting access to private IM conversations of other avatars.
39. Impersonating another individual by having the same avatar as the individual.
40. Sending unsolicited IM to another avatar.
41. Following another avatar around in a Second Life community in an unsolicited fashion.
42. Sending bulky IM to another avatar.
43. Carrying weapons in Second Life.
44. Carrying weapons in a Safe Area.
45. Participating in a community whose behaviour would be deviant in where you live in the real world.
46. Participating in a community whose behaviour would be deviant in the larger society of Second Life.
47. Participating in a community where good behaviour is expected.

48. Gambling.
49. Carrying out fraudulent deals.
50. Pushing another avatar.
51. Pushing another avatar in a Safe Area.
52. Shooting another avatar.
53. Shooting another avatar in a Safe Area.
54. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar.
55. Engaging in sexual activity with another avatar in a PG area.
56. Using a nude avatar.
57. Using a nude avatar in a PG area.
58. Exchanging pornographic material.
59. Exchanging child related pornographic material.
60. Not obeying building regulations regarding the size of the building.
61. Using aggressive security systems to protect private property.
62. Not respecting the special theme of a sim when building in it.
63. Not respecting local norms in 'deviant' sims.
64. Not respecting Group norms that are common to the membership.
65. Displaying offensive animations in Second Life.
66. Bombarding Second Life with advertising materials.
67. Broadcasting annoying sounds in Second Life.
68. Writing bulky texts on Second Life community forums.
69. Writing bulky texts on in-world chat boards.
70. Joining a virtual gaming community to look for an intimate relationship.
71. Writing harassing texts on in-world chat boards.
72. Actions that are designed to slow down Second Life server performance.

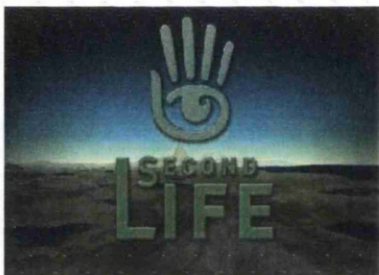
73. Actions that prevent the exchange of ideas among avatars.
74. Actions that diminish the Second Life community as a whole.
75. Using programs to vandalise community property.
76. Deliberately disrupting live events in Second Life.
77. Exchanging angry remarks on in-world chat boards.
78. Provoking unnecessary arguments on in-world chat boards.
79. Writing texts that insult a real world community on in-world chat boards.
80. Writing texts that insult a real world community on Second Life forums.
81. Impersonating a Second Life celebrity by having the same avatar as the celebrity.
82. Having intimate relationship with several avatars.
83. Using Second Life as a tool for communication to organise activities that might be considered criminal.
84. Using Teen Second Life to make contact with young adults for sexual purposes.
85. Working for big corporations taking over Second Life for commercial purposes.
86. Monopolising large spaces in Second Life.
87. Monopolising large spaces for commercial purposes.
88. Bidding the highest price and buying large lands.

Thank You Very Much!

Appendix 14: Covering Web Page



Swansea University



Second Life Research

Email me at RosserWriter@swansea.ac.uk.

Rosser Writer is a researcher from Swansea University, UK

The Research

The research is about behaviour in Second Life, in particular, about things that might be considered as 'deviant'. In this research, deviant behaviours are those that break some social norms and rules, including all sorts of behaviour, which could be seen as deviant. There are many misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Second Life in its personal and professional uses. The purpose of this research is to ask residents about your experiences of and opinions about Second Life as a community and activities you see, experience and perform within this community.

This is the final stage of my research. I have prepared 16 questions which are posted in groups of 4 in 'Resident Answers' of the SL forums which you could read and respond to. You are always welcome to suggest new questions and start new debates. Your opinions are crucial to me and will be reflected in my analysis. Please help me with this research by giving me your opinion.

The List of Questions

1. Some people suggest that Second Life encourages deviant activities. Do you feel your behaviour is less inhibited in Second Life than the physical world?
2. people suggest that Second Life is a place where we test old and new moralities and even the possibility of a world in which morals do not exist. Do you intentionally do things in Second Life that you know are clearly deviant in the physical world?
3. Some people suggest that Second Life mirrors the physical world. Is your experience of Second Life remote from, or close to, the physical world in which you reside?
4. Some people suggest that avatars are merely necessary tools to perform activities in Second Life. How does your avatar relate to the person you are in the physical world?
5. There is 3D avatar creation technology in Second Life, do you want an avatar that closely resembles you, or realises some new desired image?
6. How does the character of your avatar relate to your perception, experience and performance of activities in Second Life: if applicable, especially the deviant ones?

Internet 100%

Privacy and Security

If you do not wish to share your opinion with other residents on the forum, you are always welcome to email the answers to me at RosserWriter@swansea.ac.uk.

If you wish to give your opinion via email, please specify which question (s) you are responding to. The identity of those taking part in this research is kept confidential at all times. All Second Life names will be altered in any written documents.

7. In the communities of Second Life, there are various norms and rules, how do they shape your views about deviant activities?
8. Do you think you are free to do whatever you want in Second Life?
9. Who has the power to define deviance, or get away with deviant activities, in Second Life?
10. What sort of power, if any, do you enjoy, or dislike, in Second Life?
11. Could you please list a few activities that are deviant where you live in the physical world but are not deviant in Second Life?
12. Could you think of some activities in Second Life which you thought were deviant when you first entered the cybercommunity but think otherwise now?
13. Could you think of some activities in Second Life which you thought were Not deviant when you first entered the cybercommunity but think otherwise now?
14. Some people suggest that as you spend more time in Second Life, your avatars change from a tool, to a 'self' that gathers its own identity and eventually, there might be circumstances that a 'self' could become the 'self'. Does such a continuum exist, if so, how does it influence your perception, experience and performance of activities especially, the deviant ones in Second Life?
15. People join Second Life for different reasons and have different perceptions of deviance in their communities. How do the reasons behind your participation in Second Life influence your perception of deviance in this cybercommunity?
16. Some people suggest that as you spend more time in Second Life, your perception of the cybercommunity changes from a tool, to a place and eventually, to a 'way of being'. Do you think such a continuum exists, if so, how does it affect your perception, experience and performance of deviant activities in this cybercommunity?

Appendix 15: Second Life Community Standards

Welcome to the Second Life world!¹

We hope you'll have a richly rewarding experience, filled with creativity, self expression and fun.

The goals of the Community Standards are simple: treat each other with respect and without harassment, adhere to local standards as indicated by simulator ratings, and refrain from any hate activity which slurs a real-world individual or real-world community. Behavioral Guidelines - The 'Big Six'

Within Second Life, we want to support Residents in shaping their specific experiences and making their own choices.

The Community Standards sets out six behaviors, the 'Big Six', that will result in suspension or, with repeated violations, expulsion from the Second Life Community.

All Second Life Community Standards apply to all areas of Second Life, the Second Life Forums, and the Second Life Website.

1. Intolerance

Combating intolerance is a cornerstone of Second Life's Community Standards. Actions that marginalize, belittle, or defame individuals or groups inhibit the satisfying exchange of ideas and diminish the Second Life community as a whole. The use of derogatory or demeaning language or images in reference to another Resident's race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation is never allowed in Second Life.

2. Harassment

Given the myriad capabilities of Second Life, harassment can take many forms. Communicating or behaving in a manner which is offensively coarse, intimidating or threatening,

¹See: <http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php>; accessed 1/09/2009.

constitutes unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, or is otherwise likely to cause annoyance or alarm is Harassment.

3. Assault

Most areas in Second Life are identified as Safe. Assault in Second Life means: shooting, pushing, or shoving another Resident in a Safe Area (see Global Standards below); creating or using scripted objects which singularly or persistently target another Resident in a manner which prevents their enjoyment of Second Life.

4. Disclosure

Residents are entitled to a reasonable level of privacy with regard to their Second Life experience. Sharing personal information about a fellow Resident –including gender, religion, age, marital status, race, sexual preference, and real-world location beyond what is provided by the Resident in the First Life page of their Resident profile is a violation of that Resident’s privacy. Remotely monitoring conversations, posting conversation logs, or sharing conversation logs without consent are all prohibited in Second Life and on the Second Life Forums.

5. Adult Regions, Groups, and Listings

Second Life is an adult community, but “Adult” content, activity and communication are not permitted on the Second Life “mainland.” Such material is permitted on private regions, or on the Adult Continent, Zindra. In either case, any Adult content, activity, or communication, that falls under our Adult Maturity Definition must be on regions designated as “Adult,” and will be filtered from non-verified accounts. Other regions may be designated as either “Mature” or “PG.” For more information on how to designate land, events, groups, and classified listings, please carefully read the “Maturity Definitions.”

6. Disturbing the Peace

Every Resident has a right to live their Second Life. Disrupting scheduled events, repeated transmission of undesired advertising content, the use of repetitive sounds, following or self-spawning items, or other objects that intentionally slow server performance or inhibit another Resident’s ability to enjoy Second Life are examples of Disturbing the Peace.

Policies and Policing

Global Standards, Local Ratings

All areas of Second Life, including the www.secondlife.com website and the Second Life Forums, adhere to the same Community Standards. Regions within Second Life are noted as Safe or Unsafe and should be designated by the SL account holder as either "Adult," "Mature" or "PG." Resident behavior within each region must conform to the respective local rating.

Warning, Suspension, Banishment

Second Life is a complex society, and it can take some time for new Residents to gain a full understanding of local customs and mores. Generally, violations of the Community Standards will first result in a Warning, followed by Suspension and eventual Banishment from Second Life. In-World Representatives, called Liaisons, may occasionally address disciplinary problems with a temporary removal from Second Life.

Global Attacks

Objects, scripts, or actions which broadly interfere with or disrupt the Second Life community, the Second Life servers or other systems related to Second Life will not be tolerated in any form. We will hold you responsible for any actions you take, or that are taken by objects or scripts that belong to you. Sandboxes are available for testing objects and scripts that have components that may be unmanageable or whose behavior you may not be able to predict. If you chose to use a script that substantially disrupts the operation of Second Life, disciplinary actions will result in a minimum two-week suspension, the possible loss of in-world inventory, and a review of your account for probable expulsion from Second Life.

Alternate Accounts

While Residents may choose to play Second Life with more than one account, specifically or consistently using an alternate account to harass other Residents or violate the Community Standards is not acceptable. Alternate accounts are generally treated as separate from a Resident's principal account, but misuse of alternate accounts can and will result in disciplinary action on the principal account.

Buyer Beware

Linden Lab does not exercise editorial control over the content of Second Life, and will make no specific efforts to review the textures, objects, sounds or other content created within Second Life. Additionally, Linden Lab does not certify or endorse the operation of in-world games, vending machines, or retail locations; refunds must be requested from the owners of these objects.

Reporting Abuse

Residents should report violations of the Community Standards using the Abuse Reporter tool located under the Help menu in the in-world tool bar. We review these abuse reports, and the identity of the reporter is kept strictly confidential.

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